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MIDDLEMARCH

BOOK VIII.

SUNSET AND SUNRISE

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SUNSET AND SUNRISE.

CHAPTER LXXII.

Full souls are double mirrors, making still
An endless vista of fair things before
Repeating things behind.

DOROTHEA'S impetuous generosity, which would have leaped at once to the vindication of Lydgate from the suspicion of having accepted money as a bribe, underwent a melancholy check when she came to consider all the circumstances of the case by the light of Mr Farebrother's experience.

"It is a delicate matter to touch," he said. "How can we begin to inquire into it? It must be either publicly by setting the magistrate and coroner to work, or privately by questioning Lydgate. As to the first proceeding there is no solid

ground to go upon, else Hawley would have adopted it; and as to opening the subject with Lydgate, I confess I should shrink from it. He would probably take it as a deadly insult. I have more than once experienced the difficulty of speaking to him on personal matters. And—one should know the truth about his conduct beforehand, to feel very confident of a good result."

"I feel convinced that his conduct has not been guilty: I believe that people are almost always better than their neighbours think they are," said Dorothea. Some of her intensest experience in the last two years had set her mind strongly in opposition to any unfavourable construction of others; and for the first time she felt rather discontented with Mr Farebrother. She disliked this cautious weighing of consequences, instead of an ardent faith in efforts of justice and mercy, which would conquer by their emotional force. Two days afterwards, he was dining at the Manor with her uncle and the Chettams, and when the dessert was standing uneaten, the servants were out of the room, and Mr Brooke was nodding in a nap, she returned to the subject with renewed vivacity.

"Mr Lydgate would understand that if his friends hear a calumny about him their first wish must be to justify him. What do we live for, if

it is not to make life less difficult to each other? I cannot be indifferent to the troubles of a man who advised me in *my* trouble, and attended me in my illness."

Dorothea's tone and manner were not more energetic than they had been when she was at the head of her uncle's table nearly three years before, and her experience since had given her more right to express a decided opinion. But Sir James Chettam was no longer the diffident and acquiescent suitor: he was the anxious brother-in-law, with a devout admiration for his sister, but with a constant alarm lest she should fall under some new illusion almost as bad as marrying Casaubon. He smiled much less; when he said "Exactly" it was more often an introduction to a dissentient opinion than in those submissive bachelor days; and Dorothea found to her surprise that she had to resolve not to be afraid of him—all the more because he was really her best friend. He disagreed with her now.

"But, Dorothea," he said, remonstrantly, "you can't undertake to manage a man's life for him in that way. Lydgate must know—at least he will soon come to know how he stands. If he can clear himself, he will. He must act for himself."

"I think his friends must wait till they find an opportunity," added Mr Farebrother. "It is possible—I have often felt so much weakness in myself that I can conceive even a man of honourable disposition, such as I have always believed Lydgate to be, succumbing to such a temptation as that of accepting money which was offered more or less indirectly as a bribe to insure his silence about scandalous facts long gone by. I say, I can conceive this, if he were under the pressure of hard circumstances—if he had been harassed as I feel sure Lydgate has been. I would not believe anything worse of him except under stringent proof. But there is the terrible Nemesis following on some errors, that it is always possible for those who like it to interpret them into a crime: there is no proof in favour of the man outside his own consciousness and assertion."

"Oh, how cruel!" said Dorothea, clasping her hands. "And would you not like to be the one person who believed in that man's innocence, if the rest of the world belied him? Besides, there is a man's character beforehand to speak for him."

"But, my dear Mrs Casaubon," said Mr Farebrother, smiling gently at her ardour, "character is not cut in marble—it is not something solid

and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do."

"Then it may be rescued and healed," said Dorothea. "I should not be afraid of asking Mr Lydgate to tell me the truth, that I might help him. Why should I be afraid? Now that I am not to have the land, James, I might do as Mr Bulstrode proposed, and take his place in providing for the hospital; and I have to consult Mr Lydgate, to know thoroughly what are the prospects of doing good by keeping up the present plans. There is the best opportunity in the world for me to ask for his confidence; and he would be able to tell me things which might make all the circumstances clear. Then we would all stand by him and bring him out of his trouble. People glorify all sorts of bravery except the bravery they might show on behalf of their nearest neighbours." Dorothea's eyes had a moist brightness in them, and the changed tones of her voice roused her uncle, who began to listen.

"It is true that a woman may venture on some efforts of sympathy which would hardly succeed if we men undertook them," said Mr Farebrother, almost converted by Dorothea's ardour.

"Surely, a woman is bound to be cautious and

listen to those who know the world better than she does," said Sir James, with his little frown. "Whatever you do in the end, Dorothea, you should really keep back at present, and not volunteer any meddling with this Bulstrode business. We don't know yet what may turn up. You must agree with me?" he ended, looking at Mr Farebrother.

"I do think it would be better to wait," said the latter.

"Yes, yes, my dear," said Mr Brooke, not quite knowing at what point the discussion had arrived, but coming up to it with a contribution which was generally appropriate. "It is easy to go too far, you know. You must not let your ideas run away with you. And as to being in a hurry to put money into schemes—it won't do, you know. Garth has drawn me in uncommonly with repairs, draining, that sort of thing: I'm uncommonly out of pocket with one thing or another. I must pull up. As for you, Chettam, you are spending a fortune on those oak fences round your demesne."

Dorothea, submitting uneasily to this discouragement, went with Celia into the library, which was her usual drawing-room.

"Now, Dodo, do listen to what James says," said Celia, "else you will be getting into a scrape. You always did, and you always will, when you set about doing as you please. And I think it is a mercy now after all that you have got James to think for you. He lets you have your plans, only he hinders you from being taken in. And that is the good of having a brother instead of a husband. A husband would not let you have your plans."

"As if I wanted a husband!" said Dorothea. "I only want not to have my feelings checked at every turn." Mrs Casaubon was still undisciplined enough to burst into angry tears.

"Now, really, Dodo," said Celia, with rather a deeper guttural than usual, "you *are* contradictory: first one thing and then another. You used to submit to Mr Casaubon quite shamefully: I think you would have given up ever coming to see me if he had asked you."

"Of course I submitted to him, because it was my duty; it was my feeling for him," said Dorothea, looking through the prison of her tears.

"Then why can't you think it your duty to submit a little to what James wishes?" said Celia, with a sense of stringency in her argument. "Because he only wishes what is for your own

good. And, of course men know best about everything, except what women know better."

Dorothea laughed and forgot her tears.

"Well, I mean about babies and those things," explained Celia. "I should not give up to James when I knew he was wrong, as you used to do to Mr Casaubon."

CHAPTER LXXIII.

Pity the laden one; this wandering woe
May visit you and me.

When Lydgate had allayed Mrs Bulstrode's anxiety by telling her that her husband had been seized with faintness at the meeting, but that he trusted soon to see him better and would call again the next day, unless she sent for him earlier, he went directly home, got on his horse, and rode three miles out of the town for the sake of being out of reach.

He felt himself becoming violent and unreasonable as if raging under the pain of stings: he was ready to curse the day on which he had come to Middlemarch. Everything that had happened to him there seemed a mere preparation for this hateful fatality, which had come as a blight on his honourable ambition, and must make even people who had only vulgar standards regard his reputation as

irrevocably damaged. In such moments a man can hardly escape being unloving. Lydgate thought of himself as the sufferer, and of others as the agents who had injured his lot. He had meant everything to turn out differently; and others had thrust themselves into his life and thwarted his purposes. His marriage seemed an unmitigated calamity; and he was afraid of going to Rosamond before he had vented himself in this solitary rage, lest the mere sight of her should exasperate him and make him behave unwarrantably. There are episodes in most men's lives in which their highest qualities can only cast a deterring shadow over the objects that fill their inward vision: Lydgate's tender-heartedness was present just then only as a dread lest he should offend against it, not as an emotion that swayed him to tenderness. For he was very miserable. Only those who know the supremacy of the intellectual life—the life which has a seed of ennobling thought and purpose within it—can understand the grief of one who falls from that serene activity into the absorbing soul-wasting struggle with worldly annoyances.

How was he to live on without vindicating himself among people who suspected him of baseness? How could he go silently away from Middlemarch as if he were retreating before a just

condemnation? And yet how was he to set about vindicating himself?

For that scene at the meeting, which he had just witnessed, although it had told him no particulars, had been enough to make his own situation thoroughly clear to him. Bulstrode had been in dread of scandalous disclosures on the part of Raffles. Lydgate could now construct all the probabilities of the case. "He was afraid of some betrayal in my hearing: all he wanted was to bind me to him by a strong obligation: that was why he passed on a sudden from hardness to liberality. And he may have tampered with the patient—he may have disobeyed my orders. I fear he did. But whether he did or not, the world believes that he somehow or other poisoned the man and that I winked at the crime, if I didn't help in it. And yet—and yet he may not be guilty of the last offence; and it is just possible that the change towards me may have been a genuine relenting—the effect of second thoughts such as he alleged. What we call the 'just possible' is sometimes true and the thing we find it easier to believe is grossly false. In his last dealings with this man Bulstrode may have kept his hands pure, in spite of my suspicion to the contrary."

There was a benumbing cruelty in his position.

Even if he renounced every other consideration than that of justifying himself—if he met shrugs, cold glances, and avoidance as an accusation, and made a public statement of all the facts as he knew them, who would be convinced? It would be playing the part of a fool to offer his own testimony on behalf of himself, and say, "I did not take the money as a bribe." The circumstances would always be stronger than his assertion. And besides, to come forward and tell everything about himself must include declarations about Bulstrode which would darken the suspicions of others against him. He must tell that he had not known of Raffles's existence when he first mentioned his pressing need of money to Bulstrode, and that he took it innocently as a result of that communication, not knowing that a new motive for the loan might have arisen on his being called in to this man. And after all, the suspicion of Bulstrode's motives might be unjust.

But then came the question whether he should have acted in precisely the same way if he had not taken the money? Certainly, if Raffles had continued alive and susceptible of further treatment when he arrived, and he had then imagined any disobedience to his orders on the part of Bulstrode, he would have made a strict inquiry, and if his

conjecture had been verified he would have thrown up the case, in spite of his recent heavy obligation. But if he had not received any money—if Bulstrode had never revoked his cold recommendation of bankruptcy—would he, Lydgate, have abstained from all inquiry even on finding the man dead?—would the shrinking from an insult to Bulstrode—would the dubiousness of all medical treatment and the argument that his own treatment would pass for the wrong with most members of his profession—have had just the same force or significance with him?

That was the uneasy corner of Lydgate's consciousness while he was reviewing the facts and resisting all reproach. If he had been independent, this matter of a patient's treatment and the distinct rule that he must do or see done that which he believed best for the life committed to him, would have been the point on which he would have been the sturdiest. As it was, he had rested in the consideration that disobedience to his orders, however it might have arisen, could not be considered a crime, that in the dominant opinion obedience to his orders was just as likely to be fatal, and that the affair was simply one of etiquette. Whereas, again and again, in his time of freedom, he had denounced the perversion of

pathological doubt into moral doubt and had said —"the purest experiment in treatment may still be conscientious: my business is to take care of life, and to do the best I can think of for it. Science is properly more scrupulous than dogma. Dogma gives a charter to mistake, but the very breath of science is a contest with mistake, and must keep the conscience alive." Alas! the scientific conscience had got into the debasing company of money obligation and selfish respects. . .

"Is there a medical man of them all in Middlemarch who would question himself as I do?" said poor Lydgate, with a renewed outburst of rebellion against the oppression of his lot. "And yet they will all feel warranted in making a wide space between me and them, as if I were a leper! My practice and my reputation are utterly damned—I can see that. Even if I could be cleared by valid evidence, it would make little difference to the blessed world here. I have been set down as tainted and should be cheapened to them all the same."

Already there had been abundant signs which had hitherto puzzled him, that just when he had been paying off his debts and getting cheerfully on his feet, the townsmen were avoiding him or looking strangely at him, and in two instances it

came to his knowledge that patients of his had called in another practitioner. The reasons were too plain now. The general black-balling had begun.

No wonder that in Lydgate's energetic nature the sense of a hopeless misconstruction easily turned into a dogged resistance. The scowl which occasionally showed itself on his square brow was not a meaningless accident. Already when he was re-entering the town after that ride taken in the first hours of stinging pain, he was setting his mind on remaining in Middlemarch in spite of the worst that could be done against him. He would not retreat before calumny, as if he submitted to it. He would face it to the utmost, and no act of his should show that he was afraid. It belonged to the generosity as well as defiant force of his nature that he resolved not to shrink from showing to the full his sense of obligation to Bulstrode. It was true that the association with this man had been fatal to him—true that if he had had the thousand pounds still in his hands with all his debts unpaid he would have returned the money to Bulstrode, and taken beggary rather than the rescue which had been sullied with the suspicion of a bribe (for, remember, he was one of the proudest among the sons of men)—neverthe-

less, he would not turn away from this crushed fellow-mortal whose aid he had used, and make a pitiful effort to get acquittal for himself by howling against another. "I shall do as I think right, and explain to nobody. They will try to starve me out, but——" he was going on with an obstinate resolve, but he was getting near home, and the thought of Rosamond urged itself again into that chief place from which it had been thrust by the agonised struggles of wounded honour and pride.

How would Rosamond take it all? Here was another weight of chain to drag, and poor Lydgate was in a bad mood for bearing her dumb mastery. He had no impulse to tell her the trouble which must soon be common to them both. He preferred waiting for the incidental disclosure which events must soon bring about.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

"Mercifully grant that we may grow aged together.
—Book of Tobit: *Marriage Prayer.*

In Middlemarch a wife could not long remain ignorant that the town held a bad opinion of her husband. No feminine intimate might carry her friendship so far as to make a plain statement to the wife of the unpleasant fact known or believed about her husband; but when a woman with her thoughts much at leisure got them suddenly employed on something grievously disadvantageous to her neighbours, various moral impulses were called into play which tended to stimulate utterance. Candour was one. To be candid, in Middlemarch phraseology, meant, to use an early opportunity of letting your friends know that you did not take a cheerful view of their capacity, their conduct, or their position; and a robust candour never waited to be asked for

its opinion. Then, again, there was the love of truth—a wide phrase, but meaning in this relation, a lively objection to seeing a wife look happier than her husband's character warranted, or manifest too much satisfaction in her lot: the poor thing should have some hint given her that if she knew the truth she would have less complacency in her bonnet, and in light dishes for a supper-party. Stronger than all, there was the regard for a friend's moral improvement, sometimes called her soul, which was likely to be benefited by remarks tending to gloom, uttered with the accompaniment of pensive staring at the furniture and a manner implying that the speaker would not tell what was on her mind, from regard to the feelings of her hearer. On the whole, one might say that an ardent charity was at work setting the virtuous mind to make a neighbour unhappy for her good.

There were hardly any wives in Middlemarch whose matrimonial misfortunes would in different ways be likely to call forth more of this moral activity than Rosamond and her aunt Bulstrode. Mrs Bulstrode was not an object of dislike, and had never consciously injured any human being. Men had always thought her a handsome comfortable woman, and had reckoned it among the signs of Bulstrode's hypocrisy that he had chosen

a red-blooded Vincy, instead of a ghastly and melancholy person suited to his low esteem for earthly pleasure. When the scandal about her husband was disclosed they remarked of her—"Ah, poor woman! She's as honest as the day—*she* never suspected anything wrong in him, you may depend on it." Women, who were intimate with her, talked together much of "poor Harriet," imagined what her feelings must be when she came to know everything, and conjectured how much she had already come to know. There was no spiteful disposition towards her; rather, there was a busy benevolence anxious to ascertain what it would be well for her to feel and do under the circumstances, which of course kept the imagination occupied with her character and history from the times when she was Harriet Vincy till now. With the review of Mrs Bulstrode and her position it was inevitable to associate Rosamond, whose prospects were under the same blight with her aunt's. Rosamond was more severely criticised and less pitied, though she too, as one of the good old Vincy family who had always been known in Middlemarch, was regarded as a victim to marriage with an interloper. The Vincys had their weaknesses, but then they lay on the surface: there was never anything bad

to be "found out" concerning them. Mrs Bulstrode was vindicated from any resemblance to her husband: Harriet's faults were her own.

"She has always been showy," said Mrs Hackbutt, making tea for a small party, "though she has got into the way of putting her religion forward, to conform to her husband; she has tried to hold her head up above Middlemarch by making it known that she invites clergymen and heaven-knows-who from Riverstone and those places."

"We can hardly blame her for that," said Mrs Sprague; "because few of the best people in the town cared to associate with Bulstrode, and she must have somebody to sit down at her table."

"Mr Thesiger has always countenanced him," said Mrs Hackbutt. "I think he must be sorry now."

"But he was never fond of him in his heart —that every one knows," said Mrs Tom Toller. "Mr Thesiger never goes into extremes. He keeps to the truth in what is evangelical. It is only clergymen like Mr Tyke, who want to use Dissenting hymn-books and that low kind of religion, who ever found Bulstrode to their taste."

"I understand, Mr Tyke is in great distress about him," said Mrs Hackbutt. "And well he

may be: they say the Bulstrodes have half kept the Tyke family."

"And of course it is a discredit to his doctrines," said Mrs Sprague, who was elderly, and oldfashioned in her opinions. "People will not make a boast of being methodistical in Middlemarch for a good while to come."

"I think we must not set down people's bad actions to their religion," said falcon-faced Mrs Plymdale, who had been listening hitherto.

"Oh, my dear, we are forgetting," said Mrs Sprague. "We ought not to be talking of this before you."

"I am sure I have no reason to be partial," said Mrs Plymdale, colouring. "It's true Mr Plymdale has always been on good terms with Mr Bulstrode, and Harriet Vincy was my friend long before she married him. But I have always kept my own opinions and told her where she was wrong, poor thing. Still, in point of religion, I must say, Mr Bulstrode might have done what he has, and worse, and yet have been a man of no religion. I don't say that there has not been a little too much of that—I like moderation myself. But truth is truth. The men tried at the assizes are not all over-religious, I suppose."

"Well," said Mrs Hackbutt, wheeling adroitly,

"all I can say is, that I think she ought to separate from him."

"I can't say that," said Mrs Sprague. "She took him for better or worse, you know."

"But 'worse' can never mean finding out that your husband is fit for Newgate," said Mrs Hackbutt. "Fancy living with such a man! I should expect to be poisoned."

"Yes, I think myself it is an encouragement to crime if such men are to be taken care of and waited on by good wives," said Mrs Tom Toller.

"And a good wife poor Harriet has been," said Mrs Plymdale. "She thinks her husband the first of men. It's true he has never denied her anything."

"Well, we shall see what she will do," said Mrs Hackbutt. "I suppose she knows nothing yet, poor creature. I do hope and trust I shall not see her, for I should be frightened to death lest I should say anything about her husband. Do you think any hint has reached her?"

"I should hardly think so," said Mrs Tom Toller. "We hear that *he* is ill, and has never stirred out of the house since the meeting on Thursday; but she was with her girls at church yesterday, and they had new Tuscan bonnets. Her own had a feather in it. I have never

seen that her religion made any difference in her dress."

"She wears very neat patterns always," said Mrs Plymdale, a little stung. "And that feather I know she got dyed a pale lavender on purpose to be consistent. I must say it of Harriet that she wishes to do right."

"As to her knowing what has happened, it can't be kept from her long," said Mrs Hackbutt. "The Vincys know, for Mr Vincy was at the meeting. It will be a great blow to him. There is his daughter as well as his sister."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs Sprague. "Nobody supposes that Mr Lydgate can go on holding up his head in Middlemarch, things look so black about the thousand pounds he took just at that man's death. It really makes one shudder."

"Pride must have a fall," said Mrs Hackbutt.

"I am not so sorry for Rosamond Vincy that was, as I am for her aunt," said Mrs Plymdale. "She needed a lesson."

"I suppose the Bulstrodes will go and live abroad somewhere," said Mrs Sprague. "That is what is generally done when there is anything disgraceful in a family."

"And a most deadly blow it will be to Harriet," said Mrs Plymdale. "If ever a woman was crushed,

she will be. I pity her from my heart. And with all her faults, few women are better. From a girl she had the neatest ways, and was always good-hearted, and as open as the day. You might look into her drawers when you would—always the same. And so she has brought up Kate and Ellen. You may think how hard it will be for her to go among foreigners."

"The doctor says that is what he should recommend the Lydgates to do," said Mrs Sprague. "He says Lydgate ought to have kept among the French."

"That would suit *her* well enough, I daresay," said Mrs Plymdale; "there is that kind of lightness about her. But she got that from her mother; she never got it from her aunt Bulstrode, who always gave her good advice, and to my knowledge would rather have had her marry elsewhere."

Mrs Plymdale was in a situation which caused her some complication of feeling. There had been not only her intimacy with Mrs Bulstrode, but also a profitable business relation of the great Plymdale dyeing house with Mr Bulstrode, which on the one hand would have inclined her to desire that the mildest view of his character should be the true one, but on the other, made her the more afraid of seeming to palliate his culpability. Again, the late alliance of her family with the

Tollers had brought her in connection with the best circle, which gratified her in every direction except in the inclination to those serious views which she believed to be the best in another sense. The sharp little woman's conscience was somewhat troubled in the adjustment of these opposing "bests," and of her griefs and satisfactions under late events, which were likely to humble those who needed humbling, but also to fall heavily on her old friend whose faults she would have preferred seeing on a background of prosperity.

Poor Mrs Bulstrode, meanwhile, had been no further shaken by the oncoming tread of calamity than in the busier stirring of that secret uneasiness which had always been present in her since the last visit of Raffles to The Shrubs. That the hateful man had come ill to Stone Court, and that her husband had chosen to remain there and watch over him, she allowed to be explained by the fact that Raffles had been employed and aided in earlier days, and that this made a tie of benevolence towards him in his degraded helplessness; and she had been since then innocently cheered by her husband's more hopeful speech about his own health and ability to continue his attention to business. The calm was disturbed when Lydgate had brought him home ill from the meeting, and

in spite of comforting assurances during the next few days, she cried in private from the conviction that her husband was not suffering from bodily illness merely, but from something that afflicted his mind. He would not allow her to read to him, and scarcely to sit with him, alleging nervous susceptibility to sounds and movements; yet she suspected that in shutting himself up in his private room he wanted to be busy with his papers. Something, she felt sure, had happened. Perhaps it was some great loss of money; and she was kept in the dark. Not daring to question her husband, she said to Lydgate, on the fifth day after the meeting, when she had not left home except to go to church—

"Mr Lydgate, pray be open with me: I like to know the truth. Has anything happened to Mr Bulstrode?"

"Some little nervous shock," said Lydgate, evasively. He felt that it was not for him to make the painful revelation.

"But what brought it on?" said Mrs Bulstrode, looking directly at him with her large dark eyes.

"There is often something poisonous in the air of public rooms," said Lydgate. "Strong men can stand it, but it tells on people in proportion to the delicacy of their systems. It is often impossible

to account for the precise moment of an attack—or rather, to say why the strength gives way at a particular moment."

Mrs Bulstrode was not satisfied with this answer. There remained in her the belief that some calamity had befallen her husband, of which she was to be kept in ignorance; and it was in her nature strongly to object to such concealment. She begged leave for her daughters to sit with their father, and drove into the town to pay some visits, conjecturing that if anything were known to have gone wrong in Mr Bulstrode's affairs, she would see or hear some sign of it.

She called on Mrs Thesiger, who was not at home, and then drove to Mrs Hackbutt's on the other side of the churchyard. Mrs Hackbutt saw her coming from an up-stairs window, and remembering her former alarm lest she should meet Mrs Bulstrode, felt almost bound in consistency to send word that she was not at home; but against that, there was a sudden strong desire within her for the excitement of an interview in which she was quite determined not to make the slightest allusion to what was in her mind.

Hence Mrs Bulstrode was shown into the drawing-room, and Mrs Hackbutt went to her, with more tightness of lip and rubbing of her hands than

was usually observable in her, these being precautions adopted against freedom of speech. She was resolved not to ask how Mr Bulstrode was.

"I have not been anywhere except to church for nearly a week," said Mrs Bulstrode, after a few introductory remarks. "But Mr Bulstrode was taken so ill at the meeting on Thursday that I have not liked to leave the house."

Mrs Hackbutt rubbed the back of one hand with the palm of the other held against her chest, and let her eyes ramble over the pattern on the rug.

"Was Mr Hackbutt at the meeting?" persevered Mrs Bulstrode.

"Yes, he was," said Mrs Hackbutt, with the same attitude. "The land is to be bought by subscription, I believe."

"Let us hope that there will be no more cases of cholera to be buried in it," said Mrs Bulstrode. "It is an awful visitation. But I always think Middlemarch a very healthy spot. I suppose it is being used to it from a child; but I never saw the town I should like to live at better, and especially our end."

"I'm sure I should be glad that you always should live at Middlemarch, Mrs Bulstrode," said Mrs Hackbutt, with a slight sigh. "Still, we

must learn to resign ourselves, wherever our lot may be cast. Though I am sure there will always be people in this town who will wish you well."

Mrs Hackbutt longed to say, "if you take my advice you will part from your husband," but it seemed clear to her that the poor woman knew nothing of the thunder ready to bolt on her head, and she herself could do no more than prepare her a little. Mrs Bulstrode felt suddenly rather chill and trembling: there was evidently something unusual behind this speech of Mrs Hackbutt's; but though she had set out with the desire to be fully informed, she found herself unable now to pursue her brave purpose, and turning the conversation by an inquiry about the young Hackbutts, she soon took her leave saying that she was going to see Mrs Plymdale. On her way thither she tried to imagine that there might have been some unusually warm sparring at the meeting between Mr Bulstrode and some of his frequent opponents —perhaps Mr Hackbutt might have been one of them. That would account for everything.

But when she was in conversation with Mrs Plymdale that comforting explanation seemed no longer tenable. "Selina" received her with a pathetic affectionateness and a disposition to give edifying answers on the commonest topics, which

could hardly have reference to an ordinary quarrel of which the most important consequence was a perturbation of Mr Bulstrode's health. Beforehand Mrs Bulstrode had thought that she would sooner question Mrs Plymdale than any one else; but she found to her surprise that an old friend is not always the person whom it is easiest to make a confidant of: there was the barrier of remembered communication under other circumstances—there was the dislike of being pitied and informed by one who had been long wont to allow her the superiority. For certain words of mysterious appropriateness that Mrs Plymdale let fall about her resolution never to turn her back on her friends, convinced Mrs Bulstrode that what had happened must be some kind of misfortune, and instead of being able to say with her native directness, "What is it that you have in your mind?" she found herself anxious to get away before she had heard anything more explicit. She began to have an agitating certainty that the misfortune was something more than the mere loss of money, being keenly sensitive to the fact that Selina now, just as Mrs Hackbutt had done before, avoided noticing what she said about her husband, as they would have avoided noticing a personal blemish.

She said good-bye with nervous haste, and told

the coachman to drive to Mr Vincy's warehouse. In that short drive her dread gathered so much force from the sense of darkness, that when she entered the private counting-house where her brother sat at his desk, her knees trembled and her usually florid face was deathly pale. Something of the same effect was produced in him by the sight of her: he rose from his seat to meet her, took her by the hand, and said, with his impulsive rashness—

"God help you, Harriet! you know all."

That moment was perhaps worse than any which came after. It contained that concentrated experience which in great crises of emotion reveals the bias of a nature, and is prophetic of the ultimate act which will end an intermediate struggle. Without that memory of Raffles she might still have thought only of monetary ruin, but now along with her brother's look and words there darted into her mind the idea of some guilt in her husband—then, under the working of terror came the image of her husband exposed to disgrace—and then, after an instant of scorching shame in which she felt only the eyes of the world, with one leap of her heart she was at his side in mournful but unreproaching fellowship with shame and isolation. All this went on within her in a mere flash of

time—while she sank into the chair, and raised her eyes to her brother, who stood over her. "I know nothing, Walter. What is it?" she said, faintly.

He told her everything, very inartificially, in slow fragments, making her aware that the scandal went much beyond proof, especially as to the end of Raffles.

"People will talk," he said. "Even if a man has been acquitted by a jury, they'll talk, and nod and wink—and as far as the world goes, a man might often as well be guilty as not. It's a break-down blow, and it damages Lydgate as much as Bulstrode. I don't pretend to say what is the truth. I only wish we had never heard the name of either Bulstrode or Lydgate. You'd better have been a Vincy all your life, and so had Rosamond."

Mrs Bulstrode made no reply.

"But you must bear up as well as you can, Harriet. People don't blame *you*. And I'll stand by you whatever you make up your mind to do," said the brother, with rough but well-meaning affectionateness.

"Give me your arm to the carriage, Walter," said Mrs Bulstrode. "I feel very weak."

And when she got home she was obliged to say to her daughter, "I am not well, my dear; I

must go and lie down. Attend to your papa. Leave me in quiet. I shall take no dinner."

She locked herself in her room. She needed time to get used to her maimed consciousness, her poor lopped life, before she could walk steadily to the place allotted her. A new searching light had fallen on her husband's character, and she could not judge him leniently: the twenty years in which she had believed in him and venerated him by virtue of his concealments came back with particulars that made them seem an odious deceit. He had married her with that bad past life hidden behind him and she had no faith left to protest his innocence of the worst that was imputed to him. Her honest ostentatious nature made the sharing of a merited dishonour as bitter as it could be to any mortal.

But this imperfectly-taught woman, whose phrases and habits were an odd patchwork, had a loyal spirit within her. The man whose prosperity she had shared through nearly half a life, and who had unvaryingly cherished her—now that punishment had befallen him it was not possible to her in any sense to forsake him. There is a forsaking which still sits at the same board and lies on the same couch with the forsaken soul, withering it the more by unloving proximity. She knew, when

she locked her door, that she should unlock it ready to go down to her unhappy husband and espouse his sorrow, and say of his guilt, I will mourn and not reproach. But she needed time to gather up her strength; she needed to sob out her farewell to all the gladness and pride of her life. When she had resolved to go down, she prepared herself by some little acts which might seem mere folly to a hard onlooker; they were her way of expressing to all spectators visible or invisible that she had begun a new life in which she embraced humiliation. She took off all her ornaments and put on a plain black gown, and instead of wearing her much-adorned cap and large bows of hair, she brushed her hair down and put on a plain bonnet-cap, which made her look suddenly like an early Methodist.

Bulstrode, who knew that his wife had been out and had come in saying that she was not well, had spent the time in an agitation equal to hers. He had looked forward to her learning the truth from others, and had acquiesced in that probability, as something easier to him than any confession. But now that he imagined the moment of her knowledge come, he awaited the result in anguish. His daughters had been obliged to consent to leave him, and though he had allowed

some food to be brought to him, he had not touched it. He felt himself perishing slowly in unpitied misery. Perhaps he should never see his wife's face with affection in it again. And if he turned to God there seemed to be no answer but the pressure of retribution.

It was eight o'clock in the evening before the door opened and his wife entered. He dared not look up at her. He sat with his eyes bent down, and as she went towards him she thought he looked smaller—he seemed so withered and shrunken. A movement of new compassion and old tenderness went through her like a great wave, and putting one hand on his which rested on the arm of the chair, and the other on his shoulder, she said, solemnly but kindly—

"Look up, Nicholas."

He raised his eyes with a little start and looked at her half amazed for a moment: her pale face, her changed, mourning dress, the trembling about her mouth, all said, "I know;" and her hands and eyes rested gently on him. He burst out crying and they cried together, she sitting at his side. They could not yet speak to each other of the shame which she was bearing with him, or of the acts which had brought it down on them. His confession was silent, and her promise of faithful-

ness was silent. Open-minded as she was, she nevertheless shrank from the words which would have expressed their mutual consciousness, as she would have shrunk from flakes of fire. She could not say, "How much is only slander and false suspicion?" and he did not say, "I am innocent."

CHAPTER LXXV.

"Le sentiment de la fausseté des plaisirs présents, et l'ignorance de la vanité des plaisirs absents, causent l'inconstance."—PASCAL.

ROSAMOND had a gleam of returning cheerfulness when the house was freed from the threatening figure, and when all the disagreeable creditors were paid. But she was not joyous: her married life had fulfilled none of her hopes, and had been quite spoiled for her imagination. In this brief interval of calm, Lydgate, remembering that he had often been stormy in his hours of perturbation, and mindful of the pain Rosamond had had to bear, was carefully gentle towards her; but he, too, had lost some of his old spirit, and he still felt it necessary to refer to an economical change in their way of living as a matter of course, trying to reconcile her to it gradually, and repressing his anger when she answered by wishing that he would go to live in London. When she did not

make this answer, she listened languidly, and wondered what she had that was worth living for. The hard and contemptuous words which had fallen from her husband in his anger had deeply offended that vanity which he had at first called into active enjoyment; and what she regarded as his perverse way of looking at things, kept up a secret repulsion, which made her receive all his tenderness as a poor substitute for the happiness he had failed to give her. They were at a disadvantage with their neighbours, and there was no longer any outlook towards Quallingham — there was no outlook anywhere except in an occasional letter from Will Ladislaw. She had felt stung and disappointed by Will's resolution to quit Middlemarch, for in spite of what she knew and guessed about his admiration for Dorothea, she secretly cherished the belief that he had, or would necessarily come to have, much more admiration for herself; Rosamond being one of those women who live much in the idea that each man they meet would have preferred them if the preference had not been hopeless. Mrs Casaubon was all very well; but Will's interest in her dated before he knew Mrs Lydgate. Rosamond took his way of talking to herself, which was a mixture of playful fault-finding and hyperbolical gallantry,

as the disguise of a deeper feeling; and in his presence she felt that agreeable titillation of vanity and sense of romantic drama which Lydgate's presence had no longer the magic to create. She even fancied—what will not men and women fancy in these matters?—that Will exaggerated his admiration for Mrs Casaubon in order to pique herself. In this way poor Rosamond's brain had been busy before Will's departure. He would have made, she thought, a much more suitable husband for her than she had found in Lydgate. No notion could have been falser than this, for Rosamond's discontent in her marriage was due to the conditions of marriage itself, to its demand for self-suppression and tolerance, and not to the nature of her husband; but the easy conception of an unreal Better had a sentimental charm which diverted her *cnnui*. She constructed a little romance which was to vary the flatness of her life: Will Ladislaw was always to be a bachelor and live near her, always to be at her command, and have an understood though never fully expressed passion for her, which would be sending out lambent flames every now and then in interesting scenes. His departure had been a proportionate disappointment, and had sadly increased her weariness of Middlemarch; but at first she had the

alternative dream of pleasures in store from her intercourse with the family at Quallingham. Since then the troubles of her married life had deepened, and the absence of other relief encouraged her regretful rumination over that thin romance which she had once fed on. Men and women make sad mistakes about their own symptoms, taking their vague uneasy longings, sometimes for genius, sometimes for religion, and oftener still for a mighty love. Will Ladislaw had written chatty letters, half to her and half to Lydgate, and she had replied: their separation, she felt, was not likely to be final, and the change she now most longed for was that Lydgate should go to live in London; everything would be agreeable in London; and she had set to work with quiet determination to win this result, when there came a sudden, delightful promise which inspirited her.

It came shortly before the memorable meeting at the town-hall, and was nothing less than a letter from Will Ladislaw to Lydgate, which turned indeed chiefly on his new interest in plans of colonisation, but mentioned incidentally, that he might find it necessary to pay a visit to Middlemarch within the next few weeks—a very pleasant necessity, he said, almost as good as holidays to a schoolboy. He hoped there was his old place on

the rug, and a great deal of music in store for him. But he was quite uncertain as to the time. While Lydgate was reading the letter to Rosamond, her face looked like a reviving flower—it grew prettier and more blooming. There was nothing unendurable now: the debts were paid, Mr Ladislaw was coming, and Lydgate would be persuaded to leave Middlemarch and settle in London, which was "so different from a provincial town."

That was a bright bit of morning. But soon the sky became black over poor Rosamond. The presence of a new gloom in her husband, about which he was entirely reserved towards her—for he dreaded to expose his lacerated feeling to her neutrality and misconception—soon received a painfully strange explanation, alien to all her previous notions of what could affect her happiness. In the new gaiety of her spirits, thinking that Lydgate had merely a worse fit of moodiness than usual, causing him to leave her remarks unanswered, and evidently to keep out of her way as much as possible, she chose, a few days after the meeting, and without speaking to him on the subject, to send out notes of invitation for a small evening party, feeling convinced that this was a judicious step, since people seemed to have been

keeping aloof from them, and wanted restoring to the old habit of intercourse. When the invitations had been accepted, she would tell Lydgate, and give him a wise admonition as to how a medical man should behave to his neighbours; for Rosamond had the gravest little airs possible about other people's duties. But all the invitations were declined, and the last answer came into Lydgate's hands.

"This is Chichely's scratch. What is he writing to you about?" said Lydgate, wonderingly, as he handed the note to her. She was obliged to let him see it, and, looking at her severely, he said—

"Why on earth have you been sending out invitations without telling me, Rosamond? I beg, I insist that you will not invite any one to this house. I suppose you have been inviting others, and they have refused too."

She said nothing.

"Do you hear me?" thundered Lydgate.

"Yes, certainly I hear you," said Rosamond, turning her head aside with the movement of a graceful long-necked bird.

Lydgate tossed his head without any grace and walked out of the room, feeling himself dangerous. Rosamond's thought was, that he was

getting more and more unbearable—not that there was any new special reason for this peremptoriness. His indisposition to tell her anything in which he was sure beforehand that she would not be interested was growing into an unreflecting habit, and she was in ignorance of everything connected with the thousand pounds except that the loan had come from her uncle Bulstrode. Lydgate's odious humours and their neighbours' apparent avoidance of them had an unaccountable date for her in their relief from money difficulties. If the invitations had been accepted she would have gone to invite her mamma and the rest, whom she had seen nothing of for several days; and she now put on her bonnet to go and inquire what had become of them all, suddenly feeling as if there were a conspiracy to leave her in isolation with a husband disposed to offend everybody. It was after the dinner hour, and she found her father and mother seated together alone in the drawing-room. They greeted her with sad looks, saying, "Well, my dear!" and no more. She had never seen her father look so downcast; and seating herself near him she said—

"Is there anything the matter, papa?"

He did not answer, but Mrs Vincy said, "Oh, my

dear, have you heard nothing? It won't be long before it reaches you."

"Is it anything about Tertius?" said Rosamond, turning pale. The idea of trouble immediately connected itself with what had been unaccountable to her in him.

"Oh, my dear, yes. To think of your marrying into this trouble. Debt was bad enough, but this will be worse."

"Stay, stay, Lucy," said Mr Vincy. "Have you heard nothing about your uncle Bulstrode, Rosamond?"

'No, papa," said the poor thing, feeling as if trouble were not anything she had before experienced, but some invisible power with an iron grasp that made her soul faint within her.

Her father told her everything, saying at the end, "It's better for you to know, my dear. I think Lydgate must leave the town. Things have gone against him. I daresay he couldn't help it. I dont accuse him of any harm," said Mr Vincy. He had always before been disposed to find the utmost fault with Lydgate.

The shock to Rosamond was terrible. It seemed to her that no lot could be so cruelly hard as hers —to have married a man who had become the centre of infamous suspicions. In many cases it

is inevitable that the shame is felt to be the worst part of crime; and it would have required a great deal of disentangling reflection, such as had never entered into Rosamond's life, for her in these moments to feel that her trouble was less than if her husband had been certainly known to have done something criminal. All the shame seemed to be there. And she had innocently married this man with the belief that he and his family were a glory to her! She showed her usual reticence to her parents, and only said, that if Lydgate had done as she wished he would have left Middlemarch long ago.

"She bears it beyond anything," said her mother when she was gone.

"Ah, thank God!" said Mr Vincy, who was much broken down.

But Rosamond went home with a sense of justified repugnance towards her husband. What had he really done—how had he really acted? She did not know. Why had he not told her everything? He did not speak to her on the subject, and of course she could not speak to him. It came into her mind once that she would ask her father to let her go home again; but dwelling on that prospect made it seem utter dreariness to her: a married woman gone back to live with her

parents—life seemed to have no meaning for her in such a position: she could not contemplate herself in it.

The next two days Lydgate observed a change in her, and believed that she had heard the bad news. Would she speak to him about it, or would she go on for ever in the silence which seemed to imply that she believed him guilty? We must remember that he was in a morbid state of mind, in which almost all contact was pain. Certainly Rosamond in this case had equal reason to complain of reserve and want of confidence on his part; but in the bitterness of his soul he excused himself;—was he not justified in shrinking from the task of telling her, since now she knew the truth she had no impulse to speak to him? But a deeper-lying consciousness that he was in fault made him restless, and the silence between them became intolerable to him; it was as if they were both adrift on one piece of wreck and looked away from each other.

He thought, "I am a fool. Haven't I given up expecting anything? I have married care, not help." And that evening he said—

"Rosamond, have you heard anything that distresses you?"

"Yes," she answered, laying down her work,

which she had been carrying on with a languid semi-consciousness, most unlike her usual self.

"What have you heard?"

"Everything, I suppose. Papa told me."

"That people think me disgraced?"

"Yes," said Rosamond, faintly, beginning to sew again automatically.

There was silence. Lydgate thought, "If she has any trust in me—any notion of what I am, she ought to speak now and say that she does not believe I have deserved disgrace."

But Rosamond on her side went on moving her fingers languidly. Whatever was to be said on the subject she expected to come from Tertius. What did she know? And if he were innocent of any wrong, why did he not do something to clear himself?

This silence of hers brought a new rush of gall to that bitter mood in which Lydgate had been saying to himself that nobody believed in him—even Farebrother had not come forward. He had begun to question her with the intent that their conversation should disperse the chill fog which had gathered between them, but he felt his resolution checked by despairing resentment. Even this trouble, like the rest, she seemed to regard as if it were hers alone. He was always to her a being

apart, doing what she objected to. He started from his chair with an angry impulse, and thrusting his hands in his pockets, walked up and down the room. There was an underlying consciousness all the while that he should have to master this anger, and tell her everything, and convince her of the facts. For he had almost learned the lesson that he must bend himself to her nature, and that because she came short in her sympathy, he must give the more. Soon he recurred to his intention of opening himself: the occasion must not be lost. If he could bring her to feel with some solemnity that here was a slander which must be met and not run away from, and that the whole trouble had come out of his desperate want of money, it would be a moment for urging powerfully on her that they should be one in the resolve to do with as little money as possible, so that they might weather the bad time and keep themselves independent. He would mention the definite measures which he desired to take, and win her to a willing spirit. He was bound to try this—and what else was there for him to do?

He did not know how long he had been walking uneasily backwards and forwards, but Rosamond felt that it was long, and wished that he would sit down. She too had begun to think

this an opportunity for urging on Tertius what he ought to do. Whatever might be the truth about all this misery, there was one dread which asserted itself.

Lydgate at last seated himself, not in his usual chair, but in one nearer to Rosamond, leaning aside in it towards her, and looking at her gravely before he reopened the sad subject. He had conquered himself so far, and was about to speak with a sense of solemnity, as on an occasion which was not to be repeated. He had even opened his lips, when Rosamond, letting her hands fall, looked at him and said—

"Surely, Tertius——"

"Well?"

"Surely now at last you have given up the idea of staying in Middlemarch. I cannot go on living here. Let us go to London. Papa, and every one else, says you had better go. Whatever misery I have to put up with, it will be easier away from here."

Lydgate felt miserably jarred. Instead of that critical outpouring for which he had prepared himself with effort, here was the old round to be gone through again. He could not bear it. With a quick change of countenance he rose and went out of the room.

Perhaps if he had been strong enough to persist in his determination to be the more because she was less, that evening might have had a better issue. If his energy could have borne down that check, he might still have wrought on Rosamond's vision and will. We cannot be sure that any natures, however inflexible or peculiar, will resist this effect from a more massive being than their own. They may be taken by storm and for the moment converted, becoming part of the soul which enwraps them in the ardour of its movement. But poor Lydgate had a throbbing pain within him, and his energy had fallen short of its task.

The beginning of mutual understanding and resolve seemed as far off as ever; nay, it seemed blocked out by the sense of unsuccessful effort. They lived on from day to day, with their thoughts still apart, Lydgate going about what work he had in a mood of despair, and Rosamond feeling, with some justification, that he was behaving cruelly. It was of no use to say anything to Tertius; but when Will Ladislaw came, she was determined to tell him everything. In spite of her general reticence, she needed some one who would recognise her wrongs.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

"To mercy, pity, peace, and love
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight,
Return their thankfulness."

. . . . . .

"For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face;
And Love, the human form divine;
And Peace, the human dress."

—WILLIAM BLAKE: *Songs of Innocence.*

SOME days later, Lydgate was riding to Lowick Manor, in consequence of a summons from Dorothea. The summons had not been unexpected, since it had followed a letter from Mr Bulstrode, in which he stated that he had resumed his arrangements for quitting Middlemarch, and must remind Lydgate of his previous communications about the hospital, to the purport of which he still adhered. It had been his duty, before taking further steps, to reopen the subject with Mrs Casaubon, who now wished, as before, to discuss the question with Lydgate. "Your views may possibly have undergone some change," wrote Mr Bulstrode; "but, in

that case also, it is desirable that you should lay them before her."

Dorothea awaited his arrival with eager interest. Though, in deference to her masculine advisers, she had refrained from what Sir James had called "interfering in this Bulstrode business," the hardship of Lydgate's position was continually in her mind, and when Bulstrode applied to her again about the hospital, she felt that the opportunity was come to her which she had been hindered from hastening. In her luxurious home, wandering under the boughs of her own great trees, her thought was going out over the lot of others, and her emotions were imprisoned. The idea of some active good within her reach "haunted her like a passion," and another's need having once come to her as a distinct image, preoccupied her desire with the yearning to give relief, and made her own ease tasteless. She was full of confident hope about this interview with Lydgate, never heeding what was said of his personal reserve; never heeding that she was a very young woman. Nothing could have seemed more irrelevant to Dorothea than insistance on her youth and sex when she was moved to show her human fellowship.

As she sat waiting in the library, she could do nothing but live through again all the past

scenes which had brought Lydgate into her memories. They all owed their significance to her marriage and its troubles—but no; there were two occasions in which the image of Lydgate had come painfully in connection with his wife and some one else. The pain had been allayed for Dorothea, but it had left in her an awakened conjecture as to what Lydgate's marriage might be to him, a susceptibility to the slightest hint about Mrs Lydgate. These thoughts were like a drama to her, and made her eyes bright, and gave an attitude of suspense to her whole frame, though she was only looking out from the brown library on to the turf and the bright green buds which stood in relief against the dark evergreens.

When Lydgate came in, she was almost shocked at the change in his face, which was strikingly perceptible to her who had not seen him for two months. It was not the change of emaciation, but that effect which even young faces will very soon show from the persistent presence of resentment and despondency. Her cordial look, when she put out her hand to him, softened his expression, but only with melancholy.

"I have wished very much to see you for a long while, Mr Lydgate," said Dorothea when they were seated opposite each other; "but I put off asking

you to come until Mr Bulstrode applied to me again about the hospital. I know that the advantage of keeping the management of it separate from that of the Infirmary depends on you, or, at least, on the good which you are encouraged to hope for from having it under your control. And I am sure you will not refuse to tell me exactly what you think."

"You want to decide whether you should give a generous support to the hospital," said Lydgate. "I cannot conscientiously advise you to do it in dependence on any activity of mine. I may be obliged to leave the town."

He spoke curtly, feeling the ache of despair as to his being able to carry out any purpose that Rosamond had set her mind against.

"Not because there is no one to believe in you?" said Dorothea, pouring out her words in clearness from a full heart. "I know the unhappy mistakes about you. I knew them from the first moment to be mistakes. You have never done anything vile. You would not do anything dishonourable."

It was the first assurance of belief in him that had fallen on Lydgate's ears. He drew a deep breath, and said, "Thank you." He could say no more: it was something very new and strange in

his life that these few words of trust from a woman should be so much to him.

"I beseech you to tell me how everything was," said Dorothea, fearlessly. "I am sure that the truth would clear you."

Lydgate started up from his chair and went towards the window, forgetting where he was. He had so often gone over in his mind the possibility of explaining everything without aggravating appearances that would tell, perhaps unfairly, against Bulstrode, and had so often decided against it—he had so often said to himself that his assertions would not change people's impressions—that Dorothea's words sounded like a temptation to do something which in his soberness he had pronounced to be unreasonable.

"Tell me, pray," said Dorothea, with simple earnestness; "then we can consult together. It is wicked to let people think evil of any one falsely, when it can be hindered."

Lydgate turned, remembering where he was, and saw Dorothea's face looking up at him with a sweet trustful gravity. The presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again in their larger, quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be seen and judged in the whole-

ness of our character. That influence was beginning to act on Lydgate, who had for many days been seeing all life as one who is dragged and struggling amid the throng. He sat down again, and felt that he was recovering his old self in the consciousness that he was with one who believed in it.

"I don't want," he said, "to bear hard on Bulstrode, who has lent me money of which I was in need—though I would rather have gone without it now. He is hunted down and miserable, and has only a poor thread of life in him. But I should like to tell you everything. It will be a comfort to me to speak where belief has gone beforehand, and where I shall not seem to be offering assertions of my own honesty. You will feel what is fair to another, as you feel what is fair to me.'

"Do trust me," said Dorothea; "I will not repeat anything without your leave. But at the very least, I could say that you have made all the circumstances clear to me, and that I know you are not in any way guilty. Mr Farebrother would believe me, and my uncle, and Sir James Chettam. Nay, there are persons in Middlemarch to whom I could go; although they don't know much of me, they would believe me. They would

know that I could have no other motive than truth and justice. I would take any pains to clear you. I have very little to do. There is nothing better that I can do in the world."

Dorothea's voice, as she made this childlike picture of what she would do, might have been almost taken as a proof that she could do it effectively. The searching tenderness of her woman's tones seemed made for a defence against ready accusers. Lydgate did not stay to think that she was Quixotic: he gave himself up, for the first time in his life, to the exquisite sense of leaning entirely on a generous sympathy, without any check of proud reserve. And he told her everything, from the time when, under the pressure of his difficulties, he unwillingly made his first application to Bulstrode; gradually, in the relief of speaking, getting into a more thorough utterance of what had gone on in his mind—entering fully into the fact that his treatment of the patient was opposed to the dominant practice, into his doubts at the last, his ideal of medical duty, and his uneasy consciousness that the acceptance of the money had made some difference in his private inclination and professional behaviour, though not in his fulfilment of any publicly recognised obligation.

"It has come to my knowledge since," he added, "that Hawley sent some one to examine the housekeeper at Stone Court, and she said that she gave the patient all the opium in the phial I left, as well as a good deal of brandy. But that would not have been opposed to ordinary prescriptions, even of first-rate men. The suspicions against me had no hold there: they are grounded on the knowledge that I took money, that Bulstrode had strong motives for wishing the man to die, and that he gave me the money as a bribe to concur in some malpractices or other against the patient—that in any case I accepted a bribe to hold my tongue. They are just the suspicions that cling the most obstinately, because they lie in people's inclination and can never be disproved. How my orders came to be disobeyed is a question to which I don't know the answer. It is still possible that Bulstrode was innocent of any criminal intention—even possible that he had nothing to do with the disobedience, and merely abstained from mentioning it. But all that has nothing to do with the public belief. It is one of those cases in which a man is condemned on the ground of his character—it is believed that he has committed a crime in some undefined way, because he had the motive for doing it; and Bulstrode's

character has enveloped me, because I took his money. I am simply blighted—like a damaged ear of corn—the business is done and can't be undone."

"Oh, it is hard!" said Dorothea. "I understand the difficulty there is in your vindicating yourself. And that all this should have come to you who had meant to lead a higher life than the common, and to find out better ways—I cannot bear to rest in this as unchangeable. I know you meant that. I remember what you said to me when you first spoke to me about the hospital. There is no sorrow I have thought more about than that—to love what is great, and try to reach it, and yet to fail."

"Yes," said Lydgate, feeling that here he had found room for the full meaning of his grief. "I had some ambition. I meant everything to be different with me. I thought I had more strength and mastery. But the most terrible obstacles are such as nobody can see except oneself."

"Suppose," said Dorothea, meditatively. "Suppose we kept on the hospital according to the present plan, and you stayed here though only with the friendship and support of a few, the evil feeling towards you would gradually die out; there would come opportunities in which people would

be forced to acknowledge that they had been unjust to you, because they would see that your purposes were pure. You may still win a great fame like the Louis and Laennec I have heard you speak of, and we shall all be proud of you," she ended, with a smile.

"That might do if I had my old trust in myself," said Lydgate, mournfully. "Nothing galls me more than the notion of turning round and running away before this slander, leaving it unchecked behind me. Still, I can't ask any one to put a great deal of money into a plan which depends on me."

"It would be quite worth my while," said Dorothea, simply. "Only think. I am very uncomfortable with my money, because they tell me I have too little for any great scheme of the sort I like best, and yet I have too much. I don't know what to do. I have seven hundred a-year of my own fortune, and nineteen hundred a-year that Mr Casaubon left me, and between three and four thousand of ready money in the bank. I wished to raise money and pay it off gradually out of my income which I don't want, to buy land with and found a village which should be a school of industry; but Sir James and my uncle have convinced me that the risk would be too great.

So you see that what I should most rejoice at would be to have something good to do with my money: I should like it to make other people's lives better to them. It makes me very uneasy—coming all to me who don't want it."

A smile broke through the gloom of Lydgate's face. The childlike grave-eyed earnestness with which Dorothea said all this was irresistible—blent into an adorable whole with her ready understanding of high experience. (Of lower experience such as plays a great part in the world, poor Mrs Casaubon had a very blurred short-sighted knowledge, little helped by her imagination.) But she took the smile as encouragement of her plan.

"I think you see now that you spoke too scrupulously," she said, in a tone of persuasion. "The hospital would be one good; and making your life quite whole and well again would be another."

Lydgate's smile had died away. "You have the goodness as well as the money to do all that; if it could be done," he said. "But——"

He hesitated a little while, looking vaguely towards the window; and she sat in silent expectation. At last he turned towards her and said impetuously—

"Why should I not tell you?—you know what sort of bond marriage is. You will understand everything."

Dorothea felt her heart beginning to beat faster. Had he that sorrow too? But she feared to say any word, and he went on immediately.

"It is impossible for me now to do anything—to take any step without considering my wife's happiness. The thing that I might like to do if I were alone, is become impossible to me. I can't see her miserable. She married me without knowing what she was going into, and it might have been better for her if she had not married me."

"I know, I know—you could not give her pain, if you were not obliged to do it," said Dorothea, with keen memory of her own life.

"And she has set her mind against staying. She wishes to go. The troubles she has had here have wearied her," said Lydgate, breaking off again, lest he should say too much.

"But when she saw the good that might come of staying——" said Dorothea, remonstrantly, looking at Lydgate as if he had forgotten the reasons which had just been considered. He did not speak immediately.

"She would not see it," he said at last, curtly, feeling at first that this statement must do with-

out explanation. "And, indeed, I have lost all spirit about carrying on my life here." He paused a moment and then, following the impulse to let Dorothea see deeper into the difficulty of his life, he said, "The fact is, this trouble has come upon her confusedly. We have not been able to speak to each other about it. I am not sure what is in her mind about it: she may fear that I have really done something base. It is my fault; I ought to be more open. But I have been suffering cruelly."

"May I go and see her?" said Dorothea, eagerly. "Would she accept my sympathy? I would tell her that you have not been blamable before any one's judgment but your own. I would tell her that you shall be cleared in every fair mind. I would cheer her heart. Will you ask her if I may go to see her? I did see her once."

"I am sure you may," said Lydgate, seizing the proposition with some hope. "She would feel honoured—cheered, I think, by the proof that you at least have some respect for me. I will not speak to her about your coming—that she may not connect it with my wishes at all. I know very well that I ought not to have left anything to be told her by others, but——"

He broke off, and there was a moment's silence.

Dorothea refrained from saying what was in her mind—how well she knew that there might be invisible barriers to speech between husband and wife. This was a point on which even sympathy might make a wound. She returned to the more outward aspect of Lydgate's position, saying cheerfully—

"And if Mrs Lydgate knew that there were friends who would believe in you and support you, she might then be glad that you should stay in your place and recover your hopes—and do what you meant to do. Perhaps then you would see that it was right to agree with what I proposed about your continuing at the hospital. Surely you would, if you still have faith in it as a means of making your knowledge useful?"

Lydgate did not answer, and she saw that he was debating with himself.

"You need not decide immediately," she said, gently. "A few days hence it will be early enough for me to send my answer to Mr Bulstrode."

Lydgate still waited, but at last turned to speak in his most decisive tones.

"No; I prefer that there should be no interval left for wavering. I am no longer sure enough of myself—I mean of what it would be possible for

me to do under the changed circumstances of my life. It would be dishonourable to let others engage themselves to anything serious in dependence on me. I might be obliged to go away after all; I see little chance of anything else. The whole thing is too problematic; I cannot consent to be the cause of your goodness being wasted. No—let the new hospital be joined with the old infirmary, and everything go on as it might have done if I had never come. I have kept a valuable register since I have been there; I shall send it to a man who will make use of it," he ended bitterly. "I can think of nothing for a long while but getting an income."

"It hurts me very much to hear you speak so hopelessly," said Dorothea. "It would be a happiness to your friends, who believe in your future, in your power to do great things, if you would let them save you from that. Think how much money I have; it would be like taking a burthen from me if you took some of it every year till you got free from this fettering want of income. Why should not people do these things? It is so difficult to make shares at all even. This is one way."

"God bless you, Mrs Casaubon!" said Lydgate, rising as if with the same impulse that made his

words energetic, and resting his arm on the back of the great leather chair he had been sitting in. "It is good that you should have such feelings. But I am not the man who ought to allow himself to benefit by them. I have not given guarantees enough. I must not at least sink into the degradation of being pensioned for work that I never achieved. It is very clear to me that I must not count on anything else than getting away from Middlemarch as soon as I can manage it. I should not be able for a long while, at the very best, to get an income here, and—and it is easier to make necessary changes in a new place. I must do as other men do, and think what will please the world and bring in money; look for a little opening in the London crowd, and push myself; set up in a watering-place, or go to some southern town where there are plenty of idle English, and get myself puffed,—that is the sort of shell I must creep into and try to keep my soul alive in."

"Now that is not brave," said Dorothea,—"to give up the fight."

"No, it is not brave," said Lydgate, "but, if a man is afraid of creeping paralysis?" Then, in another tone, "Yet you have made a great difference in my courage by believing in me. Every-

thing seems more bearable since I have talked to you; and if you can clear me in a few other minds, especially in Farebrother's, I shall be deeply grateful. The point I wish you not to mention is the fact of disobedience to my orders. That would soon get distorted. After all, there is no evidence for me but people's opinion of me beforehand. You can only repeat my own report of myself."

"Mr Farebrother will believe — others will believe," said Dorothea. "I can say of you what will make it stupidity to suppose that you would be bribed to do a wickedness."

"I don't know," said Lydgate, with something like a groan in his voice. "I have not taken a bribe yet. But there is a pale shade of bribery which is sometimes called prosperity. You will do me another great kindness, then, and come to see my wife?"

"Yes, I will. I remember how pretty she is," said Dorothea, into whose mind every impression about Rosamond had cut deep. "I hope she will like me."

As Lydgate rode away, he thought, "This young creature has a heart large enough for the Virgin Mary. She evidently thinks nothing of her own future, and would pledge away half her

income at once, as if she wanted nothing for herself but a chair to sit in from which she can look down with those clear eyes at the poor mortals who pray to her. She seems to have what I never saw in any women before—a fountain of friendship towards men—a man can make a friend of her. Casaubon must have raised some heroic hallucination in her. I wonder if she could have any other sort of passion for a man? Ladislaw?—there was certainly an unusual feeling between them. And Casaubon must have had a notion of it. Well—her love might help a man more than her money."

Dorothea on her side had immediately formed a plan of relieving Lydgate from his obligation to Bulstrode, which she felt sure was a part, though small, of the galling pressure he had to bear. She sat down at once under the inspiration of their interview, and wrote a brief note, in which she pleaded that she had more claim than Mr Bulstrode had to the satisfaction of providing the money which had been serviceable to Lydgate—that it would be unkind in Lydgate not to grant her the position of being his helper in this small matter, the favour being entirely to her who had so little that was plainly marked out for her to

do with her superfluous money. He might call her a creditor or by any other name if it did but imply that he granted her request. She enclosed a cheque for a thousand pounds, and determined to take the letter with her the next day when she went to see Rosamond.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

"And so thy fall hath left a kind of blot
To mark the full-fraught man and best endued
With some suspicion."

—*Henry VI.*, Part I.

THE next day Lydgate had to go to Brassing, and told Rosamond that he should be away until the evening. Of late she had never gone beyond her own house and garden, except to church, and once to see her papa, to whom she said, "If Tertius goes away, you will help us to move, will you not, papa? I suppose we shall have very little money. I am sure I hope some one will help us." And Mr Vincy had said, "Yes, child, I don't mind a hundred or two. I can see the end of that." With these exceptions she had sat at home in languid melancholy and suspense, fixing her mind on Will Ladislaw's coming as the one point of hope and interest, and associating this with some new urgency on Lydgate to make immediate

arrangements for leaving Middlemarch and going to London, till she felt assured that the coming would be a potent cause of the going, without at all seeing how. This way of establishing sequences is too common to be fairly regarded as a peculiar folly in Rosamond. And it is precisely this sort of sequence which causes the greatest shock when it is sundered: for to see how an effect may be produced is often to see possible missings and checks; but to see nothing except the desirable cause, and close upon it the desirable effect, rids us of doubt and makes our minds strongly intuitive. That was the process going on in poor Rosamond, while she arranged all objects around her with the same nicety as ever, only with more slowness—or sat down to the piano, meaning to play, and then desisting, yet lingering on the music-stool with her white fingers suspended on the wooden front, and looking before her in dreamy *ennui*. Her melancholy had become so marked that Lydgate felt a strange timidity before it, as a perpetual silent reproach, and the strong man, mastered by his keen sensibilities towards this fair fragile creature whose life he seemed somehow to have bruised, shrank from her look, and sometimes started at her approach, fear of her and fear for her rushing in only the

more forcibly after it had been momentarily expelled by exasperation.

But this morning Rosamond descended from her room up-stairs—where she sometimes sat the whole day when Lydgate was out—equipped for a walk in the town. She had a letter to post—a letter addressed to Mr Ladislaw and written with charming discretion, but intended to hasten his arrival by a hint of trouble. The servant-maid, their sole house-servant now, noticed her coming down-stairs in her walking dress, and thought "there never did anybody look so pretty in a bonnet, poor thing."

Meanwhile Dorothea's mind was filled with her project of going to Rosamond, and with the many thoughts, both of the past and the probable future, which gathered round the idea of that visit. Until yesterday when Lydgate had opened to her a glimpse of some trouble in his married life, the image of Mrs Lydgate had always been associated for her with that of Will Ladislaw. Even in her most uneasy moments—even when she had been agitated by Mrs Cadwallader's painfully graphic report of gossip—her effort, nay, her strongest impulsive prompting, had been towards the vindication of Will from any sullying surmises; and when, in her meeting with him afterwards, she had at first

interpreted his words as a probable allusion to a feeling towards Mrs Lydgate which he was determined to cut himself off from indulging, she had had a quick, sad, excusing vision of the charm there might be in his constant opportunities of companionship with that fair creature, who most likely shared his other tastes as she evidently did his delight in music. But there had followed his parting words—the few passionate words in which he had implied that she herself was the object of whom his love held him in dread, that it was his love for her only which he was resolved not to declare but to carry away into banishment. From the time of that parting, Dorothea, believing in Will's love for her, believing with a proud delight in his delicate sense of honour and his determination that no one should impeach him justly, felt her heart quite at rest as to the regard he might have for Mrs Lydgate. She was sure that the regard was blameless.

There are natures in which, if they love us, we are conscious of having a sort of baptism and consecration: they bind us over to rectitude and purity by their pure belief about us; and our sins become that worst kind of sacrilege which tears down the invisible altar of trust. "If you are not good, none is good"—those little words may give

a terrific meaning to responsibility, may hold a vitriolic intensity for remorse.

Dorothea's nature was of that kind: her own passionate faults lay along the easily-counted open channels of her ardent character; and while she was full of pity for the visible mistakes of others, she had not yet any material within her experience for subtle constructions and suspicions of hidden wrong. But that simplicity of hers, holding up an ideal for others in her believing conception of them, was one of the great powers of her womanhood. And it had from the first acted strongly on Will Ladislaw. He felt, when he parted from her, that the brief words by which he had tried to convey to her his feeling about herself and the division which her fortune made between them, would only profit by their brevity when Dorothea had to interpret them: he felt that in her mind he had found his highest estimate.

And he was right there. In the months since their parting Dorothea had felt a delicious though sad repose in their relation to each other, as one which was inwardly whole and without blemish. She had an active force of antagonism within her, when the antagonism turned on the defence either of plans or persons that she believed in; and the

wrongs which she felt that Will had received from her husband, and the external conditions which to others were grounds for slighting him, only gave the more tenacity to her affection and admiring judgment. And now with the disclosures about Bulstrode had come another fact affecting Will's social position, which roused afresh Dorothea's inward resistance to what was said about him in that part of her world which lay within park palings.

"Young Ladislaw the grandson of a thieving Jew pawnbroker" was a phrase which had entered emphatically into the dialogues about the Bulstrode business, at Lowick, Tipton, and Freshitt, and was a worse kind of placard on poor Will's back than the "Italian with white mice." Upright Sir James Chettam was convinced that his own satisfaction was righteous when he thought with some complacency that here was an added league to that mountainous distance between Ladislaw and Dorothea, which enabled him to dismiss any anxiety in that direction as too absurd. And perhaps there had been some pleasure in pointing Mr Brooke's attention to this ugly bit of Ladislaw's genealogy, as a fresh candle for him to see his own folly by. Dorothea had observed the animus with which Will's part in

the painful story had been recalled more than once; but she had uttered no word, being checked now, as she had not been formerly in speaking of Will, by the consciousness of a deeper relation between them which must always remain in consecrated secrecy. But her silence shrouded her resistant emotion into a more thorough glow; and this misfortune in Will's lot which, it seemed, others were wishing to fling at his back as an opprobrium, only gave something more of enthusiasm to her clinging thought.

She entertained no visions of their ever coming into nearer union, and yet she had taken no posture of renunciation. She had accepted her whole relation to Will very simply as part of her marriage sorrows, and would have thought it very sinful in her to keep up an inward wail because she was not completely happy, being rather disposed to dwell on the superfluities of her lot. She could bear that the chief pleasures of her tenderness should lie in memory, and the idea of marriage came to her solely as a repulsive proposition from some suitor of whom she at present knew nothing, but whose merits, as seen by her friends, would be a source of torment to her:—"somebody who will manage your property for you, my dear," was Mr Brooke's attractive suggestion of suitable

characteristics. "I should like to manage it myself, if I knew what to do with it," said Dorothea. No she adhered to her declaration that she would never be married again, and in the long valley of her life, which looked so flat and empty of way-marks, guidance would come as she walked along the road, and saw her fellow-passengers by the way.

This habitual state of feeling about Will Ladislaw had been strong in all her waking hours since she had proposed to go and see Mrs Lydgate, making a sort of background against which she saw Rosamond's figure presented to her without hindrances to her interest and compassion. There was evidently some mental separation, some barrier to complete confidence which had arisen between this wife and the husband who had yet made her happiness a law to him. That was a trouble which no third person must directly touch. But Dorothea thought with deep pity of the loneliness which must have come upon Rosamond from the suspicions cast on her husband; and there would surely be help in the manifestation of respect for Lydgate and sympathy with her.

"I shall talk to her about her husband," thought Dorothea, as she was being driven towards the town. The clear spring morning, the scent of the

moist earth, the fresh leaves just showing their creased-up wealth of greenery from out their half-opened sheaths, seemed part of the cheerfulness she was feeling from a long conversation with Mr Farebrother, who had joyfully accepted the justifying explanation of Lydgate's conduct. "I shall take Mrs Lydgate good news, and perhaps she will like to talk to me and make a friend of me."

Dorothea had another errand in Lowick Gate: it was about a new fine-toned bell for the schoolhouse, and as she had to get out of her carriage very near to Lydgate's, she walked thither across the street, having told the coachman to wait for some packages. The street door was open, and the servant was taking the opportunity of looking out at the carriage which was pausing within sight when it became apparent to her that the lady who "belonged to it" was coming towards her.

"Is Mrs Lydgate at home?" said Dorothea.

"I'm not sure, my lady; I'll see, if you'll please to walk in," said Martha, a little confused on the score of her kitchen apron, but collected enough to be sure that "mum" was not the right title for this queenly young widow with a carriage and pair. "Will you please to walk in, and I'll go and see."

"Say that I am Mrs Casaubon," said Dorothea,

as Martha moved forward intending to show her into the drawing-room and then to go up-stairs to see if Rosamond had returned from her walk.

They crossed the broader part of the entrance-hall, and turned up the passage which led to the garden. The drawing-room door was unlatched, and Martha, pushing it without looking into the room, waited for Mrs Casaubon to enter and then turned away, the door having swung open and swung back again without noise.

Dorothea had less of outward vision than usual this morning, being filled with images of things as they had been and were going to be. She found herself on the other side of the door without seeing anything remarkable, but immediately she heard a voice speaking in low tones which startled her as with a sense of dreaming in daylight, and advancing unconsciously a step or two beyond the projecting slab of a bookcase, she saw, in the terrible illumination of a certainty which filled up all outlines, something which made her pause motionless, without self-possession enough to speak.

Seated with his back towards her on a sofa which stood against the wall on a line with the door by which she had entered, she saw Will Ladislaw: close by him and turned towards him

with a flushed tearfulness which gave a new brilliancy to her face sat Rosamond, her bonnet hanging back, while Will leaning towards her clasped both her upraised hands in his and spoke with low-toned fervour.

Rosamond in her agitated absorption had not noticed the silently advancing figure; but when Dorothea, after the first immeasurable instant of this vision, moved confusedly backward and found herself impeded by some piece of furniture, Rosamond was suddenly aware of her presence, and with a spasmodic movement snatched away her hands and rose, looking at Dorothea who was necessarily arrested. Will Ladislaw, starting up, looked round also, and meeting Dorothea's eyes with a new lightning in them, seemed changing to marble. But she immediately turned them away from him to Rosamond and said in a firm voice—

"Excuse me, Mrs Lydgate, the servant did not know that you were here. I called to deliver an important letter for Mr Lydgate, which I wished to put into your own hands."

She laid down the letter on the small table which had checked her retreat, and then including Rosamond and Will in one distant glance and bow, she went quickly out of the room, meeting in the

passage the surprised Martha, who said she was sorry the mistress was not at home, and then showed the strange lady out with an inward reflection that grand people were probably more impatient than others.

Dorothea walked across the street with her most elastic step and was quickly in her carriage again.

"Drive on to Freshitt Hall," she said to the coachman, and any one looking at her might have thought that though she was paler than usual she was never animated by a more self-possessed energy. And that was really her experience. It was as if she had drunk a great draught of scorn that stimulated her beyond the susceptibility to other feelings. She had seen something so far below her belief, that her emotions rushed back from it and made an excited throng without an object. She needed something active to turn her excitement out upon. She felt power to walk and work for a day, without meat or drink. And she would carry out the purpose with which she had started in the morning, of going to Freshitt and Tipton to tell Sir James and her uncle all that she wished them to know about Lydgate, whose married loneliness under his trial now presented itself to her with new significance, and made her more ardent

in readiness to be his champion. She had never felt anything like this triumphant power of indignation in the struggle of her married life, in which there had always been a quickly subduing pang; and she took it as a sign of new strength.

"Dodo, how very bright your eyes are!" said Celia, when Sir James was gone out of the room. "And you don't see anything you look at, Arthur or anything. You are going to do something uncomfortable, I know. Is it all about Mr Lydgate, or has something else happened?" Celia had been used to watch her sister with expectation.

"Yes, dear, a great many things have happened," said Dodo, in her full tones.

"I wonder what," said Celia, folding her arms cozily and leaning forward upon them.

"Oh, all the troubles of all people on the face of the earth," said Dorothea, lifting her arms to the back of her head.

"Dear me, Dodo, are you going to have a scheme for them?" said Celia, a little uneasy at this Hamlet-like raving.

But Sir James came in again, ready to accompany Dorothea to the Grange, and she finished her expedition well, not swerving in her resolution until she descended at her own door.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

Would it were yesterday and I i' the grave,
With her sweet faith above for monument.

ROSAMOND and Will stood motionless—they did not know how long—he looking towards the spot where Dorothea had stood, and she looking towards him with doubt. It seemed an endless time to Rosamond, in whose inmost soul there was hardly so much annoyance as gratification from what had just happened. Shallow natures dream of an easy sway over the emotions of others, trusting implicitly in their own petty magic to turn the deepest streams, and confident, by pretty gestures and remarks, of making the thing that is not as though it were. She knew that Will had received a severe blow, but she had been little used to imagining other people's states of mind except as a material cut into shape by her own wishes; and she believed in her own power to soothe or subdue. Even Tertius, that most perverse of men, was always

subdued in the long-run: events had been obstinate, but still Rosamond would have said now, as she did before her marriage, that she never gave up what she had set her mind on.

She put out her arm and laid the tips of her fingers on Will's coat-sleeve.

"Don't touch me!" he said, with an utterance like the cut of a lash, darting from her, and changing from pink to white and back again, as if his whole frame were tingling with the pain of the sting. He wheeled round to the other side of the room and stood opposite to her, with the tips of his fingers in his pockets and his head thrown back, looking fiercely not at Rosamond but at a point a few inches away from her.

She was keenly offended, but the signs she made of this were such as only Lydgate was used to interpret. She became suddenly quiet and seated herself, untying her hanging bonnet and laying it down with her shawl. Her little hands which she folded before her were very cold.

It would have been safer for Will in the first instance to have taken up his hat and gone away; but he had felt no impulse to do this; on the contrary, he had a horrible inclination to stay and shatter Rosamond with his anger. It seemed as impossible to bear the fatality she had drawn

down on him without venting his fury as it would be to a panther to bear the javelin-wound without springing and biting. And yet—how could he tell a woman that he was ready to curse her? He was fuming under a repressive law which he was forced to acknowledge: he was dangerously poised, and Rosamond's voice now brought the decisive vibration. In flute-like tones of sarcasm she said,

"You can easily go after Mrs Casaubon and explain your preference."

"Go after her!" he burst out, with a sharp edge in his voice. "Do you think she would turn to look at me, or value any word I ever uttered to her again at more than a dirty feather?—Explain! How can a man explain at the expense of a woman?"

"You can tell her what you please," said Rosamond, with more tremor.

"Do you suppose she would like me better for sacrificing you? She is not a woman to be flattered because I made myself despicable—to believe that I must be true to her because I was a dastard to you."

He began to move about with the restlessness of a wild animal that sees prey but cannot reach it. Presently he burst out again—

"I had no hope before—not much—of anything better to come. But I had one certainty—that

she believed in me. Whatever people had said or done about me, she believed in me.—That's gone! She'll never again think me anything but a paltry pretence—too nice to take heaven except upon flattering conditions, and yet selling myself for any devil's change by the sly. She'll think of me as an incarnate insult to her, from the first moment we . . . ."

Will stopped as if he had found himself grasping something that must not be thrown and shattered. He found another vent for his rage by snatching up Rosamond's words again, as if they were reptiles to be throttled and flung off.

"Explain! Tell a man to explain how he dropped into hell! Explain my preference! I never had a *preference* for her, any more than I have a preference for breathing. No other woman exists by the side of her. I would rather touch her hand if it were dead, than I would touch any other woman's living."

Rosamond, while these poisoned weapons were being hurled at her, was almost losing the sense of her identity, and seemed to be waking into some new terrible existence. She had no sense of chill resolute repulsion, of reticent self-justification such as she had known under Lydgate's most stormy displeasure: all her sensibility was turned

into a bewildering novelty of pain—she felt a new terrified recoil under a lash never experienced before. What another nature felt in opposition to her own was being burnt and bitten into her consciousness. When Will had ceased to speak she had become an image of sickened misery: her lips were pale, and her eyes had a tearless dismay in them. If it had been Tertius who stood opposite to her, that look of misery would have been a pang to him, and he would have sunk by her side to comfort her—with that strong-armed comfort which she had often held very cheap.

Let it be forgiven to Will that he had no such movement of pity. He had felt no bond beforehand to this woman who had spoiled the ideal treasure of his life, and he held himself blameless. He knew that he was cruel, but he had no relenting in him yet.

After he had done speaking, he still moved about, half in absence of mind, and Rosamond sat perfectly still. At length Will, seeming to bethink himself, took up his hat, yet stood some moments irresolute. He had spoken to her in a way that made a phrase of common politeness difficult to utter; and yet, now that he had come to the point of going away from her without further speech, he shrank from it as a brutality—he felt checked and

stultified in his anger. He walked towards the mantelpiece and leaned his arm on it, and waited in silence for—he hardly knew what. The vindictive fire was still burning in him, and he could utter no word of retractation; but it was still in his mind that having come back to this hearth where he had enjoyed a caressing friendship he had found calamity seated there—he had had suddenly revealed to him a trouble that lay outside the home as well as within it. And what seemed a foreboding was pressing upon him as with slow pincers:—that his life might come to be enslaved by this helpless woman who had thrown herself upon him in the dreary sadness of her heart. But he was in gloomy rebellion against the fact that his quick apprehensiveness foreshadowed to him, and when his eyes fell on Rosamond's blighted face, it seemed to him that he was the more pitiable of the two; for pain must enter into its glorified life of memory before it can turn into compassion.

And so they remained for many minutes, opposite each other, far apart, in silence; Will's face still possessed by a mute rage, and Rosamond's by a mute misery. The poor thing had no force to fling out any passion in return; the terrible collapse of the illusion towards which all her hope had been strained was a stroke which had too

thoroughly shaken her: her little world was in ruins, and she felt herself tottering in the midst as a lonely bewildered consciousness.

Will wished that she would speak and bring some mitigating shadow across his own cruel speech, which seemed to stand staring at them both in mockery of any attempt at revived fellowship. But she said nothing, and at last with a desperate effort over himself, Will asked, "Shall I come in and see Lydgate this evening?"

"If you like," Rosamond answered, just audibly.

And then Will went out of the house, Martha never knowing that he had been in.

After he was gone, Rosamond tried to get up from her seat, but fell back fainting. When she came to herself again, she felt too ill to make the exertion of rising to ring the bell, and she remained helpless until the girl, surprised at her long absence, thought for the first time of looking for her in all the down-stairs rooms. Rosamond said that she had felt suddenly sick and faint, and wanted to be helped up-stairs. When there she threw herself on the bed with her clothes on, and lay in apparent torpor, as she had done once before on a memorable day of grief.

Lydgate came home earlier than he had expect-

ed, about half-past five, and found her there. The perception that she was ill threw every other thought into the background. When he felt her pulse, her eyes rested on him with more persistence than they had done for a long while, as if she felt some content that he was there. He perceived the difference in a moment, and seating himself by her, put his arm gently under her, and, bending over her, said, "My poor Rosamond! has something agitated you?" Clinging to him she fell into hysterical sobbings and cries, and for the next hour he did nothing but soothe and tend her. He imagined that Dorothea had been to see her, and that all this effect on her nervous system, which evidently involved some new turning towards himself, was due to the excitement of the new impressions which that visit had raised.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

"Now, I saw in my dream, that just as they had ended their talk, they drew nigh to a very miry slough, that was in the midst of the plain; and they, being heedless, did both fall suddenly into the bog. The name of the slough was Despond."—BUNYAN.

WHEN Rosamond was quiet, and Lydgate had left her, hoping that she might soon sleep under the effect of an anodyne, he went into the drawing-room to fetch a book which he had left there, meaning to spend the evening in his work-room, and he saw on the table Dorothea's letter addressed to him. He had not ventured to ask Rosamond if Mrs Casaubon had called, but the reading of this letter assured him of the fact, for Dorothea mentioned that it was to be carried by herself.

When Will Ladislaw came in a little later, Lydgate met him with a surprise which made it clear that he had not been told of the earlier visit, and Will could not say, "Did not Mrs Lydgate tell you that I came this morning?"

"Poor Rosamond is ill," Lydgate added immediately on his greeting.

"Not seriously, I hope," said Will.

"No—only a slight nervous shock—the effect of some agitation. She has been overwrought lately. The truth is, Ladislaw, I am an unlucky devil. We have gone through several rounds of purgatory since you left, and I have lately got on to a worse ledge of it than ever. I suppose you are only just come down—you look rather battered—you have not been long enough in the town to hear anything?"

"I travelled all night and got to the White Hart at eight o'clock this morning. I have been shutting myself up and resting," said Will, feeling himself a sneak, but seeing no alternative to this evasion.

And then he heard Lydgate's account of the troubles which Rosamond had already depicted to him in her way. She had not mentioned the fact of Will's name being connected with the public story—this detail not immediately affecting her—and Will now heard it for the first time.

"I thought it better to tell you that your name is mixed up with the disclosures," said Lydgate, who could understand better than most men how Will might be stung by the revelation. "You

will be sure to hear it as soon as you turn out into the town. I suppose it is true that Raffles spoke to you."

"Yes," said Will, sardonically. "I shall be fortunate if gossip does not make me the most disreputable person in the whole affair. I should think the latest version must be, that I plotted with Raffles to murder Bulstrode and ran away from Middlemarch for the purpose."

He was thinking "Here is a new ring in the sound of my name to recommend it in her hearing; however—what does it signify now?"

But he said nothing of Bulstrode's offer to him. Will was very open and careless about his personal affairs, but it was among the more exquisite touches in nature's modelling of him that he had a delicate generosity which warned him into reticence here. He shrank from saying that he had rejected Bulstrode's money, in the moment when he was learning that it was Lydgate's misfortune to have accepted it.

Lydgate too was reticent in the midst of his confidence. He made no allusion to Rosamond's feeling under their trouble, and of Dorothea he only said, "Mrs Casaubon has been the one person to come forward and say that she had no belief in any of the suspicions against me."

Observing a change in Will's face, he avoided any further mention of her, feeling himself too ignorant of their relation to each other not to fear that his words might have some hidden painful bearing on it. And it occurred to him that Dorothea was the real cause of Will's present visit to Middlemarch.

The two men were pitying each other, but it was only Will who guessed the extent of his companion's trouble. When Lydgate spoke with desperate resignation of going to settle in London, and said with a faint smile, "We shall have you again, old fellow," Will felt inexpressibly mournful, and said nothing. Rosamond had that morning entreated him to urge this step on Lydgate; and it seemed to Will as if he were beholding in a magic panorama a future where he himself was sliding into that pleasureless yielding to the small solicitations of circumstance, which is a commoner history of perdition than any single momentous bargain.

We are on a perilous margin when we begin to look passively at our future selves, and see our own figures led with dull consent into insipid misdoing and shabby achievement. Poor Lydgate was inwardly groaning on that margin, and Will was arriving at it. It seemed to him this evening

as if the cruelty of his outburst to Rosamond had made an obligation for him, and he dreaded the obligation: he dreaded Lydgate's unsuspecting goodwill: he dreaded his own distaste for his spoiled life, which would leave him in motiveless levity.

CHAPTER LXXX.

"Stern lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face;
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong;
And the most ancient Heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong."
—WORDSWORTH: *Ode to Duty.*

WHEN Dorothea had seen Mr Farebrother in the morning, she had promised to go and dine at the parsonage on her return from Freshitt. There was a frequent interchange of visits between her and the Farebrother family, which enabled her to say that she was not at all lonely at the Manor, and to resist for the present the severe prescription of a lady companion. When she reached home and remembered her engagement, she was glad of it; and finding that she had still an hour before she could dress for dinner, she walked straight to the schoolhouse and entered into a conversation with

the master and mistress about the new bell, giving eager attention to their small details and repetitions, and getting up a dramatic sense that her life was very busy. She paused on her way back to talk to old Master Bunney who was putting in some garden-seeds, and discoursed wisely with that rural sage about the crops that would make the most return on a perch of ground, and the result of sixty years' experience as to soils—namely, that if your soil was pretty mellow it would do, but if there came wet, wet, wet to make it all of a mummy, why then——

Finding that the social spirit had beguiled her into being rather late, she dressed hastily and went over to the parsonage rather earlier than was necessary. That house was never dull, Mr Farebrother, like another White of Selborne, having continually something new to tell of his inarticulate guests and *protégés*, whom he was teaching the boys not to torment; and he had just set up a pair of beautiful goats to be pets of the village in general, and to walk at large as sacred animals. The evening went by cheerfully till after tea, Dorothea talking more than usual and dilating with Mr Farebrother on the possible histories of creatures that converse compendiously with their antennæ, and for aught we know may hold re-

formed parliaments; when suddenly some inarticulate little sounds were heard which called everybody's attention.

"Henrietta Noble," said Mrs Farebrother, seeing her small sister moving about the furniture-legs distressfully, "what is the matter?"

"I have lost my tortoise-shell lozenge-box. I fear the kitten has rolled it away," said the tiny old lady, involuntarily continuing her beaver-like notes.

"Is it a great treasure, aunt?" said Mr Farebrother, putting up his glasses and looking at the carpet.

"Mr Ladislaw gave it me," said Miss Noble. "A German box—very pretty; but if it falls it always spins away as far as it can."

"Oh, if it is Ladislaw's present," said Mr Farebrother, in a deep tone of comprehension, getting up and hunting. The box was found at last under a chiffonier, and Miss Noble grasped it with delight, saying, "it was under a fender the last time."

"That is an affair of the heart with my aunt," said Mr Farebrother, smiling at Dorothea, as he reseated himself.

"If Henrietta Noble forms an attachment to any one, Mrs Casaubon," said his mother, emphatically,

—"she is like a dog—she would take their shoes for a pillow and sleep the better."

"Mr Ladislaw's shoes, I would," said Henrietta Noble.

Dorothea made an attempt at smiling in return. She was surprised and annoyed to find that her heart was palpitating violently, and that it was quite useless to try after a recovery of her former animation. Alarmed at herself—fearing some further betrayal of a change so marked in its occasion, she rose and said in a low voice with undisguised anxiety, "I must go; I have overtired myself."

Mr Farebrother, quick in perception, rose and said, "It is true; you must have half-exhausted yourself in talking about Lydgate. That sort of work tells upon one after the excitement is over."

He gave her his arm back to the Manor, but Dorothea did not attempt to speak, even when he said good-night.

The limit of resistance was reached, and she had sunk back helpless within the clutch of inescapable anguish. Dismissing Tantripp with a few faint words, she locked her door, and turning away from it towards the vacant room she pressed her hands hard on the top of her head, and moaned out—

"Oh, I did love him!"

Then came the hour in which the waves of suffering shook her too thoroughly to leave any power of thought. She could only cry in loud whispers, between her sobs, after her lost belief which she had planted and kept alive from a very little seed since the days in Rome—after her lost joy of clinging with silent love and faith to one who, misprized by others, was worthy in her thought—after her lost woman's pride of reigning in his memory—after her sweet dim perspective of hope, that along some pathway they should meet with unchanged recognition and take up the backward years as a yesterday.

In that hour she repeated what the merciful eyes of solitude have looked on for ages in the spiritual struggles of man—she besought hardness and coldness and aching weariness to bring her relief from the mysterious incorporeal might of her anguish: she lay on the bare floor and let the night grow cold around her; while her grand woman's frame was shaken by sobs as if she had been a despairing child.

There were two images—two living forms that tore her heart in two, as if it had been the heart of a mother who seems to see her child divided by the sword, and presses one bleeding half to her breast while her gaze goes forth in agony towards

the half which is carried away by the lying woman that has never known the mother's pang.

Here, with the nearness of an answering smile, here within the vibrating bond of mutual speech, was the bright creature whom she had trusted—who had come to her like the spirit of morning visiting the dim vault where she sat as the bride of a worn-out life; and now, with a full consciousness which had never awakened before, she stretched out her arms towards him and cried with bitter cries that their nearness was a parting vision: she discovered her passion to herself in the unshrinking utterance of despair.

And there, aloof, yet persistently with her, moving wherever she moved, was the Will Ladislaw who was a changed belief exhausted of hope, a detected illusion—no, a living man towards whom there could not yet struggle any wail of regretful pity, from the midst of scorn and indignation and jealous offended pride. The fire of Dorothea's anger was not easily spent, and it flamed out in fitful returns of spurning reproach. Why had he come obtruding his life into hers, hers that might have been whole enough without him? Why had he brought his cheap regard and his lip-born words to her who had nothing paltry to give in exchange? He knew that he was

deluding her—wished, in the very moment of farewell, to make her believe that he gave her the whole price of her heart, and knew that he had spent it half before. Why had he not stayed among the crowd of whom she asked nothing—but only prayed that they might be less contemptible?

But she lost energy at last even for her loud-whispered cries and moans: she subsided into helpless sobs, and on the cold floor she sobbed herself to sleep.

In the chill hours of the morning twilight, when all was dim around her, she awoke—not with any amazed wondering where she was or what had happened, but with the clearest consciousness that she was looking into the eyes of sorrow. She rose, and wrapped warm things around her, and seated herself in a great chair where she had often watched before. She was vigorous enough to have borne that hard night without feeling ill in body, beyond some aching and fatigue; but she had waked to a new condition: she felt as if her soul had been liberated from its terrible conflict; she was no longer wrestling with her grief, but could sit down with it as a lasting companion and make it a sharer in her thoughts. For now the thoughts came thickly. It was not in Dorothea's nature,

for longer than the duration of a paroxysm, to sit in the narrow cell of her calamity, in the besotted misery of a consciousness that only sees another's lot as an accident of its own.

She began now to live through that yesterday morning deliberately again, forcing herself to dwell on every detail and its possible meaning. Was she alone in that scene? Was it her event only? She forced herself to think of it as bound up with another woman's life—a woman towards whom she had set out with a longing to carry some clearness and comfort into her beclouded youth. In her first outleap of jealous indignation and disgust, when quitting the hateful room, she had flung away all the mercy with which she had undertaken that visit. She had enveloped both Will and Rosamond in her burning scorn, and it seemed to her as if Rosamond were burned out of her sight for ever. But that base prompting which makes a woman more cruel to a rival than to a faithless lover, could have no strength of recurrence in Dorothea when the dominant spirit of justice within her had once overcome the tumult and had once shown her the truer measure of things. All the active thought with which she had before been representing to herself the trials of Lydgate's lot, and this young marriage union which, like her

own, seemed to have its hidden as well as evident troubles—all this vivid sympathetic experience returned to her now as a power: it asserted itself as acquired knowledge asserts itself and will not let us see as we saw in the day of our ignorance. She said to her own irremediable grief, that it should make her more helpful, instead of driving her back from effort.

And what sort of crisis might not this be in three lives whose contact with hers laid an obligation on her as if they had been suppliants bearing the sacred branch? The objects of her rescue were not to be sought out by her fancy: they were chosen for her. She yearned towards the perfect Right, that it might make a throne within her, and rule her errant will. "What should I do —how should I act now, this very day, if I could clutch my own pain, and compel it to silence, and think of those three?"

It had taken long for her to come to that question, and there was light piercing into the room. She opened her curtains, and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond, outside the entrance-gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving—perhaps the shepherd with his

dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining.

What she would resolve to do that day did not yet seem quite clear, but something that she could achieve stirred her as with an approaching murmur which would soon gather distinctness. She took off the clothes which seemed to have some of the weariness of a hard watching in them, and began to make her toilet. Presently she rang for Tantripp, who came in her dressing-gown.

"Why, madam, you've never been in bed this blessed night," burst out Tantripp, looking first at the bed and then at Dorothea's face, which in spite of bathing had the pale cheeks and pink eyelids of a *mater dolorosa*. "You'll kill yourself, you *will*. Anybody might think now you had a right to give yourself a little comfort."

"Don't be alarmed, Tantripp," said Dorothea, smiling. "I have slept; I am not ill. I shall be glad of a cup of coffee as soon as possible. And I want you to bring me my new dress; and most likely I shall want my new bonnet to-day."

"They've lain there a month and more ready for you, madam, and most thankful I shall be to see you with a couple o' pounds' worth less of crape," said Tantripp, stooping to light the fire. "There's a reason in mourning, as I've always said; and three folds at the bottom of your skirt and a plain quilling in your bonnet—and if ever anybody looked like an angel, it's you in a net quilling—is what's consistent for a second year. At least, that's *my* thinking," ended Tantripp, looking anxiously at the fire; "and if anybody was to marry me flattering himself as I should wear those hijeous weepers two years for him, he'd be deceived by his own vanity, that's all."

"The fire will do, my good Tan," said Dorothea, speaking as she used to do in the old Lausanne days, only with a very low voice; "get me the coffee."

She folded herself in the large chair, and leaned her head against it in fatigued quiescence, while Tantripp went away wondering at this strange contrariness in her young mistress—that just the morning when she had more of a widow's face than ever, she should have asked for her lighter mourning which she had waived before. Tantripp would never have found the clue to this mystery. Dorothea wished to acknowledge that

she had not the less an active life before her because she had buried a private joy; and the tradition that fresh garments belonged to all initiation, haunting her mind, made her grasp after even that slight outward help towards calm resolve. For the resolve was not easy.

Nevertheless at eleven o'clock she was walking towards Middlemarch, having made up her mind that she would make as quietly and unnoticeably as possible her second attempt to see and save Rosamond.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

"Du Erde warst auch diese Nacht beständig,
Und athmest neu erquickt zu meinen Füssen,
Beginnest schon mit Lust mich zu umgeben,
Du regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschliessen
Zum höchsten Dasein immerfort zu streben."
—*Faust:* 2r Theil.

When Dorothea was again at Lydgate's door speaking to Martha, he was in the room close by with the door ajar, preparing to go out. He heard her voice, and immediately came to her.

"Do you think that Mrs Lydgate can receive me this morning?" she said, having reflected that it would be better to leave out all allusion to her previous visit.

"I have no doubt she will," said Lydgate, suppressing his thought about Dorothea's looks, which were as much changed as Rosamond's, "if you will be kind enough to come in and let me tell her that you are here. She has not been very well since you were here yesterday, but she is better

this morning, and I think it is very likely that she will be cheered by seeing you again."

It was plain that Lydgate, as Dorothea had expected, knew nothing about the circumstances of her yesterday's visit; nay, he appeared to imagine that she had carried it out according to her intention. She had prepared a little note asking Rosamond to see her, which she would have given to the servant if he had not been in the way, but now she was in much anxiety as to the result of his announcement.

After leading her into the drawing-room, he paused to take a letter from his pocket and put it into her hands, saying, "I wrote this last night, and was going to carry it to Lowick in my ride. When one is grateful for something too good for common thanks, writing is less unsatisfactory than speech—one does not at least *hear* how inadequate the words are."

Dorothea's face brightened. "It is I who have most to thank for, since you have let me take that place. You *have* consented?" she said, suddenly doubting.

"Yes, the cheque is going to Bulstrode today."

He said no more, but went up-stairs to Rosamond, who had but lately finished dressing her-

self, and sat languidly wondering what she should do next, her habitual industry in small things, even in the days of her sadness, prompting her to begin some kind of occupation, which she dragged through slowly or paused in from lack of interest. She looked ill, but had recovered her usual quietude of manner, and Lydgate had feared to disturb her by any questions. He had told her of Dorothea's letter containing the cheque, and afterwards he had said, "Ladislaw is come, Rosy; he sat with me last night; I daresay he will be here again to-day. I thought he looked rather battered and depressed." And Rosamond had made no reply.

Now, when he came up, he said to her very gently, "Rosy, dear, Mrs Casaubon is come to see you again—you would like to see her, would you not?" That she coloured and gave rather a startled movement did not surprise him after the agitation produced by the interview yesterday—a beneficent agitation, he thought, since it seemed to have made her turn to him again.

Rosamond dared not say no. She dared not with a tone of her voice touch the facts of yesterday. Why had Mrs Casaubon come again? The answer was a blank which Rosamond could only fill up with dread, for Will Ladislaw's lacerating words had made every thought of Dorothea a fresh smart to

her. Nevertheless, in her new humiliating uncertainty she dared do nothing but comply. She did not say yes, but she rose and let Lydgate put a light shawl over her shoulders, while he said, "I am going out immediately." Then something crossed her mind which prompted her to say, "Pray tell Martha not to bring any one else into the drawing-room." And Lydgate assented, thinking that he fully understood this wish. He led her down to the drawing-room door, and then turned away, observing to himself that he was rather a blundering husband to be dependent for his wife's trust in him on the influence of another woman.

Rosamond, wrapping her soft shawl around her as she walked towards Dorothea, was inwardly wrapping her soul in cold reserve. Had Mrs Casaubon come to say anything to her about Will? If so, it was a liberty that Rosamond resented; and she prepared herself to meet every word with polite impassibility. Will had bruised her pride too sorely for her to feel any compunction towards him and Dorothea: her own injury seemed much the greater. Dorothea was not only the "preferred" woman, but had also a formidable advantage in being Lydgate's benefactor; and to poor Rosamond's pained confused vision it seemed

that this Mrs Casaubon—this woman who predominated in all things concerning her—must have come now with the sense of having the advantage, and with animosity prompting her to use it. Indeed, not Rosamond only, but any one else, knowing the outer facts of the case, and not the simple inspiration on which Dorothea acted, might well have wondered why she came.

Looking like the lovely ghost of herself, her graceful slimness wrapped in her soft white shawl, the rounded infantine mouth and cheek inevitably suggesting mildness and innocence, Rosamond paused at three yards' distance from her visitor and bowed. But Dorothea, who had taken off her gloves, from an impulse which she could never resist when she wanted a sense of freedom, came forward, and with her face full of a sad yet sweet openness, put out her hand. Rosamond could not avoid meeting her glance, could not avoid putting her small hand into Dorothea's, which clasped it with gentle motherliness; and immediately a doubt of her own prepossessions began to stir within her. Rosamond's eye was quick for faces; she saw that Mrs Casaubon's face looked pale and changed since yesterday, yet gentle, and like the firm softness of her hand. But Dorothea had counted a little too much on her own strength: the clearness

and intensity of her mental action this morning were the continuance of a nervous exaltation which made her frame as dangerously responsive as a bit of finest Venetian crystal; and in looking at Rosamond, she suddenly found her heart swelling, and was unable to speak—all her effort was required to keep back tears. She succeeded in that, and the emotion only passed over her face like the spirit of a sob; but it added to Rosamond's impression that Mrs Casaubon's state of mind must be something quite different from what she had imagined.

So they sat down without a word of preface on the two chairs that happened to be nearest, and happened also to be close together; though Rosamond's notion when she first bowed was that she should stay a long way off from Mrs Casaubon. But she ceased thinking how anything would turn out—merely wondering what would come. And Dorothea began to speak quite simply, gathering firmness as she went on.

"I had an errand yesterday which I did not finish; that is why I am here again so soon. You will not think me too troublesome, when I tell you that I came to talk to you about the injustice that has been shown towards Mr Lydgate. It will cheer you—will it not?—to know a great deal

about him, that he may not like to speak about himself just because it is in his own vindication and to his own honour. You will like to know that your husband has warm friends, who have not left off believing in his high character? You will let me speak of this without thinking that I take a liberty?"

The cordial, pleading tones which seemed to flow with generous heedlessness above all the facts which had filled Rosamond's mind as grounds of obstruction and hatred between her and this woman, came as soothingly as a warm stream over her shrinking fears. Of course Mrs Casaubon had the facts in her mind, but she was not going to speak of anything connected with them. That relief was too great for Rosamond to feel much else at the moment. She answered prettily, in the new ease of her soul—

"I know you have been very good. I shall like to hear anything you will say to me about Tertius."

"The day before yesterday," said Dorothea, "when I had asked him to come to Lowick to give me his opinion on the affairs of the Hospital, he told me everything about his conduct and feelings in this sad event which has made ignorant people cast suspicions on him. The reason he told me

was because I was very bold and asked him. I believed that he had never acted dishonourably, and I begged him to tell me the history. He confessed to me that he had never told it before, not even to you, because he had a great dislike to say, 'I was not wrong,' as if that were proof, when there are guilty people who will say so. The truth is, he knew nothing of this man Raffles, or that there were any bad secrets about him; and he thought that Mr Bulstrode offered him the money because he repented, out of kindness, of having refused it before. All his anxiety about his patient was to treat him rightly, and he was a little uncomfortable that the case did not end as he had expected; but he thought then and still thinks that there may have been no wrong in it on any one's part. And I have told Mr Farebrother, and Mr Brooke, and Sir James Chettam: they all believe in your husband. That will cheer you, will it not? That will give you courage?"

Dorothea's face had become animated, and as it beamed on Rosamond very close to her, she felt something like bashful timidity before a superior, in the presence of this self-forgetful ardour. She said, with blushing embarrassment, "Thank you: you are very kind."

"And he felt that he had been so wrong not to

pour out everything about this to you. But you will forgive him. It was because he feels so much more about your happiness than anything else—he feels his life bound into one with yours, and it hurts him more than anything, that his misfortunes must hurt you. He could speak to me because I am an indifferent person. And then I asked him if I might come to see you; because I felt so much for his trouble and yours. That is why I came yesterday, and why I am come to-day. Trouble is so hard to bear, is it not?—How can we live and think that any one has trouble—piercing trouble —and we could help them, and never try?"

Dorothea, completely swayed by the feeling that she was uttering, forgot everything but that she was speaking from out the heart of her own trial to Rosamond's. The emotion had wrought itself more and more into her utterance, till the tones might have gone to one's very marrow, like a low cry from some suffering creature in the darkness. And she had unconsciously laid her hand again on the little hand that she had pressed before.

Rosamond, with an overmastering pang, as if a wound within her had been probed, burst into hysterical crying as she had done the day before when she clung to her husband. Poor Dorothea

was feeling a great wave of her own sorrow returning over her—her thought being drawn to the possible share that Will Ladislaw might have in Rosamond's mental tumult. She was beginning to fear that she should not be able to suppress herself enough to the end of this meeting, and while her hand was still resting on Rosamond's lap, though the hand underneath it was withdrawn, she was struggling against her own rising sobs. She tried to master herself with the thought that this might be a turning-point in three lives —not in her own; no, there the irrevocable had happened, but—in those three lives which were touching hers with the solemn neighbourhood of danger and distress. The fragile creature who was crying close to her—there might still be time to rescue her from the misery of false incompatible bonds; and this moment was unlike any other: she and Rosamond could never be together again with the same thrilling consciousness of yesterday within them both. She felt the relation between them to be peculiar enough to give her a peculiar influence, though she had no conception that the way in which her own feelings were involved was fully known to Mrs Lydgate.

It was a newer crisis in Rosamond's experience than even Dorothea could imagine: she was

under the first great shock that had shattered her dream-world in which she had been easily confident of herself and critical of others; and this strange unexpected manifestation of feeling in a woman whom she had approached with a shrinking aversion and dread, as one who must necessarily have a jealous hatred towards her, made her soul totter all the more with a sense that she had been walking in an unknown world which had just broken in upon her.

When Rosamond's convulsed throat was subsiding into calm, and she withdrew the handkerchief with which she had been hiding her face, her eyes met Dorothea's as helplessly as if they had been blue flowers. What was the use of thinking about behaviour after this crying? And Dorothea looked almost as childish, with the neglected trace of a silent tear. Pride was broken down between these two.

"We were talking about your husband," Dorothea said, with some timidity. "I thought his looks were sadly changed with suffering the other day. I had not seen him for many weeks before. He said he had been feeling very lonely in his trial; but I think he would have borne it all better if he had been able to be quite open with you."

"Tertius is so angry and impatient if I say anything," said Rosamond, imagining that he had been complaining of her to Dorothea. "He ought not to wonder that I object to speak to him on painful subjects."

"It was himself he blamed for not speaking," said Dorothea. "What he said of you was, that he could not be happy in doing anything which made you unhappy—that his marriage was of course a bond which must affect his choice about everything; and for that reason he refused my proposal that he should keep his position at the Hospital, because that would bind him to stay in Middlemarch, and he would not undertake to do anything which would be painful to you. He could say that to me, because he knows that I had much trial in my marriage, from my husband's illness, which hindered his plans and saddened him; and he knows that I have felt how hard it is to walk always in fear of hurting another who is tied to us."

Dorothea waited a little; she had discerned a faint pleasure stealing over Rosamond's face. But there was no answer, and she went on, with a gathering tremor, "Marriage is so unlike everything else. There is something even awful in the nearness it brings. Even if we loved some one

else better than—than those we were married to, it would be no use"—poor Dorothea, in her palpitating anxiety, could only seize her language brokenly—"I mean, marriage drinks up all our power of giving or getting any blessedness in that sort of love. I know it may be very dear—but it murders our marriage—and then the marriage stays with us like a murder—and everything else is gone. And then our husband—if he loved and trusted us, and we have not helped him, but made a curse in his life . . ."

Her voice had sunk very low: there was a dread upon her of presuming too far, and of speaking as if she herself were perfection addressing error. She was too much preoccupied with her own anxiety, to be aware that Rosamond was trembling too; and filled with the need to express pitying fellowship rather than rebuke, she put her hands on Rosamond's, and said with more agitated rapidity,—"I know, I know that the feeling may be very dear—it has taken hold of us unawares—it is so hard, it may seem like death to part with it—and we are weak—I am weak——"

The waves of her own sorrow, from out of which she was struggling to save another, rushed over Dorothea with conquering force. She stopped in speechless agitation, not crying, but feeling as if

she were being inwardly grappled. Her face had become of a deathlier paleness, her lips trembled, and she pressed her hands helplessly on the hands that lay under them.

Rosamond, taken hold of by an emotion stronger than her own—hurried along in a new movement which gave all things some new, awful, undefined aspect—could find no words, but involuntarily she put her lips to Dorothea's forehead which was very near her, and then for a minute the two women clasped each other as if they had been in a shipwreck.

"You are thinking what is not true," said Rosamond, in an eager half-whisper, while she was still feeling Dorothea's arms round her—urged by a mysterious necessity to free herself from something that oppressed her as if it were blood-guiltiness.

They moved apart, looking at each other.

"When you came in yesterday—it was not as you thought," said Rosamond, in the same tone.

There was a movement of surprised attention in Dorothea. She expected a vindication of Rosamond herself.

"He was telling me how he loved another woman, that I might know he could never love me," said Rosamond, getting more and more hurried as

she went on. "And now I think he hates me because — because you mistook him yesterday. He says it is through me that you will think ill of him—think that he is a false person. But it shall not be through me. He has never had any love for me—I know he has not—he has always thought slightly of me. He said yesterday that no other woman existed for him beside you. The blame of what happened is entirely mine. He said he could never explain to you—because of me. He said you could never think well of him again. But now I have told you, and he cannot reproach me any more."

Rosamond had delivered her soul under impulses which she had not known before. She had begun her confession under the subduing influence of Dorothea's emotion; and as she went on she had gathered the sense that she was repelling Will's reproaches, which were still like a knife-wound within her.

The revulsion of feeling in Dorothea was too strong to be called joy. It was a tumult in which the terrible strain of the night and morning made a resistant pain:—she could only perceive that this would be joy when she had recovered her power of feeling it. Her immediate consciousness was one of immense sympathy without check;

she cared for Rosamond without struggle now, and responded earnestly to her last words:

"No, he cannot reproach you any more."

With her usual tendency to over-estimate the good in others, she felt a great outgoing of her heart towards Rosamond for the generous effort which had redeemed her from suffering, not counting that the effort was a reflex of her own energy.

After they had been silent a little, she said—

"You are not sorry that I came this morning?"

"No, you have been very good to me," said Rosamond. "I did not think that you would be so good. I was very unhappy. I am not happy now. Everything is so sad."

"But better days will come. Your husband will be rightly valued. And he depends on you for comfort. He loves you best. The worst loss would be to lose that—and you have not lost it," said Dorothea.

She tried to thrust away the too overpowering thought of her own relief, lest she should fail to win some sign that Rosamond's affection was yearning back towards her husband.

"Tertius did not find fault with me, then?" said Rosamond, understanding now that Lydgate might have said anything to Mrs Casaubon, and that she certainly was different from other women.

Perhaps there was a faint taste of jealousy in the question. A smile began to play over Dorothea's face as she said—

"No, indeed! How could you imagine it?" But here the door opened, and Lydgate entered.

"I am come back in my quality of doctor," he said. "After I went away, I was haunted by two pale faces: Mrs Casaubon looked as much in need of care as you, Rosy. And I thought that I had not done my duty in leaving you together; so when I had been to Coleman's I came home again. I noticed that you were walking, Mrs Casaubon, and the sky has changed—I think we may have rain. May I send some one to order your carriage to come for you?"

"Oh no! I am strong: I need the walk," said Dorothea, rising with animation in her face. "Mrs Lydgate and I have chatted a great deal, and it is time for me to go. I have always been accused of being immoderate and saying too much."

She put out her hand to Rosamond, and they said an earnest, quiet good-bye without kiss or other show of effusion: there had been between them too much serious emotion for them to use the signs of it superficially.

As Lydgate took her to the door, she said nothing of Rosamond, but told him of Mr Fare-

brother and the other friends who had listened with belief to his story.

When he came back to Rosamond, she had already thrown herself on the sofa, in resigned fatigue.

"Well, Rosy," he said, standing over her, and touching her hair, "what do you think of Mrs Casaubon now you have seen so much of her?"

"I think she must be better than any one," said Rosamond, "and she is very beautiful. If you go to talk to her so often, you will be more discontented with me than ever!"

Lydgate laughed at the "so often." "But has she made you any less discontented with me?"

"I think she has," said Rosamond, looking up in his face. "How heavy your eyes are, Tertius —and do push your hair back." He lifted up his large white hand to obey her, and felt thankful for this little mark of interest in him. Poor Rosamond's vagrant fancy had come back terribly scourged—meek enough to nestle under the old despised shelter. And the shelter was still there: Lydgate had accepted his narrowed lot with sad resignation. He had chosen this fragile creature, and had taken the burthen of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carrying that burthen pitifully.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

"My grief lies onward and my joy behind."
—SHAKESPEARE: *Sonnets.*

EXILES notoriously feed much on hopes, and are unlikely to stay in banishment unless they are obliged. When Will Ladislaw exiled himself from Middlemarch he had placed no stronger obstacle to his return than his own resolve, which was by no means an iron barrier, but simply a state of mind liable to melt into a minuet with other states of mind, and to find itself bowing, smiling, and giving place with polite facility. As the months went on, it had seemed more and more difficult to him to say why he should not run down to Middlemarch—merely for the sake of hearing something about Dorothea; and if on such a flying visit he should chance by some strange coincidence to meet with her, there was no reason for him to be ashamed of having taken an innocent

journey which he had beforehand supposed that he should not take. Since he was hopelessly divided from her, he might surely venture into her neighbourhood; and as to the suspicious friends who kept a dragon watch over her—their opinions seemed less and less important with time and change of air.

And there had come a reason quite irrespective of Dorothea, which seemed to make a journey to Middlemarch a sort of philanthropic duty. Will had given a disinterested attention to an intended settlement on a new plan in the Far West, and the need for funds in order to carry out a good design had set him on debating with himself whether it would not be a laudable use to make of his claim on Bulstrode, to urge the application of that money which had been offered to himself as a means of carrying out a scheme likely to be largely beneficial. The question seemed a very dubious one to Will, and his repugnance to again entering into any relation with the banker might have made him dismiss it quickly, if there had not arisen in his imagination the probability that his judgment might be more safely determined by a visit to Middlemarch.

That was the object which Will stated to himself as a reason for coming down. He had meant

to confide in Lydgate, and discuss the money question with him, and he had meant to amuse himself for the few evenings of his stay by having a great deal of music and badinage with fair Rosamond, without neglecting his friends at Lowick Parsonage:—if the Parsonage was close to the Manor, that was no fault of his. He had neglected the Farebrothers before his departure, from a proud resistance to the possible accusation of indirectly seeking interviews with Dorothea; but hunger tames us, and Will had become very hungry for the vision of a certain form and the sound of a certain voice. Nothing had done instead—not the opera, or the converse of zealous politicians, or the flattering reception (in dim corners) of his new hand in leading articles.

Thus he had come down, foreseeing with confidence how almost everything would be in his familiar little world; fearing, indeed, that there would be no surprises in his visit. But he had found that humdrum world in a terribly dynamic condition, in which even badinage and lyrism had turned explosive; and the first day of this visit had become the most fatal epoch of his life. The next morning he felt so harassed with the nightmare of consequences—he dreaded so much the immediate issues before him—that seeing while he

breakfasted the arrival of the Riverston coach, he went out hurriedly and took his place on it, that he might be relieved, at least for a day, from the necessity of doing or saying anything in Middlemarch. Poor Will Ladislaw was in one of those tangled crises which are commoner in experience than one might imagine, from the shallow absoluteness of men's judgments. He had found Lydgate, for whom he had the sincerest respect, under circumstances which claimed his thorough and frankly-declared sympathy; and the reason why, in spite of that claim, it would have been better for Will to have avoided all further intimacy, or even contact, with Lydgate, was precisely of the kind to make such a course appear impossible. To a creature of Will's susceptible temperament—without any neutral region of indifference in his nature, ready to turn everything that befell him into the collisions of a passionate drama—the revelation that Rosamond had made her happiness in any way dependent on him was a difficulty which his outburst of rage towards her had immeasurably increased for him. He hated his own cruelty, and yet he dreaded to show the fulness of his relenting: he must go to her again; the friendship could not be put to a sudden end; and her unhappiness was a power which he dreaded. And all the while

there was no more foretaste of enjoyment in the life before him than if his limbs had been lopped off and he was making his fresh start on crutches. In the night he had debated whether he should not get on the coach, not for Riverston, but for London, leaving a note to Lydgate which would give a makeshift reason for his retreat. But there were strong cords pulling him back from that abrupt departure: the blight on his happiness in thinking of Dorothea, the crushing of that chief hope which had remained in spite of the acknowledged necessity for renunciation, was too fresh a misery for him to resign himself to it, and go straightway into a distance which was also despair.

Thus he did nothing more decided than taking the Riverston coach. He came back again by it while it was still daylight, having made up his mind that he must go to Lydgate's that evening. The Rubicon, we know, was a very insignificant stream to look at; its significance lay entirely in certain invisible conditions. Will felt as if he were forced to cross his small boundary ditch, and what he saw beyond it was not empire, but discontented subjection.

But it is given to us sometimes even in our everyday life to witness the saving influence of a noble

nature, the divine efficacy of rescue that may lie in a self-subduing act of fellowship. If Dorothea, after her night's anguish, had not taken that walk to Rosamond—why, she perhaps would have been a woman who gained a higher character for discretion, but it would certainly not have been as well for those three who were on one hearth in Lydgate's house at half-past seven that evening.

Rosamond had been prepared for Will's visit, and she received him with a languid coldness which Lydgate accounted for by her nervous exhaustion, of which he could not suppose that it had any relation to Will. And when she sat in silence bending over a bit of work, he innocently apologised for her in an indirect way by begging her to lean backward and rest. Will was miserable in the necessity for playing the part of a friend who was making his first appearance and greeting to Rosamond, while his thoughts were busy about her feeling since that scene of yesterday, which seemed still inexorably to enclose them both, like the painful vision of a double madness. It happened that nothing called Lydgate out of the room; but when Rosamond poured out the tea, and Will came near to fetch it, she placed a tiny bit of folded paper in his saucer. He saw it and secured it quickly, but as he went

back to his inn he had no eagerness to unfold the paper. What Rosamond had written to him would probably deepen the painful impressions of the evening. Still, he opened and read it by his bed-candle. There were only these few words in her neatly-flowing hand :—

"I have told Mrs Casaubon. She is not under any mistake about you. I told her because she came to see me and was very kind. You will have nothing to reproach me with now. I shall not have made any difference to you."

The effect of these words was not quite all gladness. As Will dwelt on them with excited imagination, he felt his cheeks and ears burning at the thought of what had occurred between Dorothea and Rosamond—at the uncertainty how far Dorothea might still feel her dignity wounded in having an explanation of his conduct offered to her. There might still remain in her mind a changed association with him which made an irremediable difference—a lasting flaw. With active fancy he wrought himself into a state of doubt little more easy than that of the man who has escaped from wreck by night and stands on unknown ground in the darkness. Until that wretched yesterday—except the moment of vexation long ago in the very same room and in the

very same presence—all their vision, all their thought of each other, had been as in a world apart, where the sunshine fell on tall white lilies, where no evil lurked, and no other soul entered. But now—would Dorothea meet him in that world again?

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

"And now good-morrow to our waking souls
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room, an everywhere."
—Dr Donne.

On the second morning after Dorothea's visit to Rosamond, she had had two nights of sound sleep, and had not only lost all traces of fatigue, but felt as if she had a great deal of superfluous strength —that is to say, more strength than she could manage to concentrate on any occupation. The day before, she had taken long walks outside the grounds, and had paid two visits to the Parsonage; but she never in her life told any one the reason why she spent her time in that fruitless manner, and this morning she was rather angry with herself for her childish restlessness. To-day was to be spent quite differently. What was there to be done in the village? O dear! nothing. Everybody was well and had flannel; nobody's pig had

died; and it was Saturday morning, when there was a general scrubbing of floors and door-stones, and when it was useless to go into the school. But there were various subjects that Dorothea was trying to get clear upon, and she resolved to throw herself energetically into the gravest of all. She sat down in the library before her particular little heap of books on political economy and kindred matters, out of which she was trying to get light as to the best way of spending money so as not to injure one's neighbours, or—what comes to the same thing—so as to do them the most good. Here was a weighty subject which, if she could but lay hold of it, would certainly keep her mind steady. Unhappily her mind slipped off it for a whole hour; and at the end she found herself reading sentences twice over with an intense consciousness of many things, but not of any one thing contained in the text. This was hopeless. Should she order the carriage and drive to Tipton? No; for some reason or other she preferred staying at Lowick. But her vagrant mind must be reduced to order: there was an art in self-discipline; and she walked round and round the brown library considering by what sort of manœuvre she could arrest her wandering thoughts. Perhaps a mere task was the best means—something to which

she must go doggedly. Was there not the geography of Asia Minor, in which her slackness had often been rebuked by Mr Casaubon? She went to the cabinet of maps and unrolled one: this morning she might make herself finally sure that Paphlagonia was not on the Levantine coast, and fix her total darkness about the Chalybes firmly on the shores of the Euxine. A map was a fine thing to study when you were disposed to think of something else, being made up of names that would turn into a chime if you went back upon them. Dorothea set earnestly to work, bending close to her map, and uttering the names in an audible, subdued tone, which often got into a chime. She looked amusingly girlish after all her deep experience—nodding her head and marking the names off on her fingers, with a little pursing of her lip, and now and then breaking off to put her hands on each side of her face and say, "Oh dear! oh dear!"

There was no reason why this should end any more than a merry-go-round; but it was at last interrupted by the opening of the door and the announcement of Miss Noble.

The little old lady, whose bonnet hardly reached Dorothea's shoulder, was warmly welcomed, but while her hand was being pressed she made many

of her beaver-like noises, as if she had something difficult to say.

"Do sit down," said Dorothea, rolling a chair forward. "Am I wanted for anything? I shall be so glad if I can do anything."

"I will not stay," said Miss Noble, putting her hand into her small basket, and holding some article inside it nervously; "I have left a friend in the churchyard." She lapsed into her inarticulate sounds, and unconsciously drew forth the article which she was fingering. It was the tortoise-shell lozenge-box, and Dorothea felt the colour mounting to her cheeks.

"Mr Ladislaw," continued the timid little woman. "He fears he has offended you, and has begged me to ask if you will see him for a few minutes."

Dorothea did not answer on the instant: it was crossing her mind that she could not receive him in this library, where her husband's prohibition seemed to dwell. She looked towards the window. Could she go out and meet him in the grounds? The sky was heavy, and the trees had begun to shiver as at a coming storm. Besides, she shrank from going out to him.

"Do see him, Mrs Casaubon," said Miss Noble,

pathetically; "else I must go back and say No, and that will hurt him."

"Yes, I will see him," said Dorothea. "Pray tell him to come."

What else was there to be done? There was nothing that she longed for at that moment except to see Will: the possibility of seeing him had thrust itself insistently between her and every other object; and yet she had a throbbing excitement like an alarm upon her—a sense that she was doing something daringly defiant for his sake.

When the little lady had trotted away on her mission, Dorothea stood in the middle of the library with her hands falling clasped before her, making no attempt to compose herself in an attitude of dignified unconsciousness. What she was least conscious of just then was her own body: she was thinking of what was likely to be in Will's mind, and of the hard feelings that others had had about him. How could any duty bind her to hardness? Resistance to unjust dispraise had mingled with her feeling for him from the very first, and now in the rebound of her heart after her anguish the resistance was stronger than ever. "If I love him too much it is because he has been used so ill:"—there was a voice within

her saying that to some imagined audience in the library, when the door was opened, and she saw Will before her.

She did not move, and he came towards her with more doubt and timidity in his face than she had ever seen before. He was in a state of uncertainty which made him afraid lest some look or word of his should condemn him to a new distance from her; and Dorothea was afraid of her own emotion. She looked as if there were a spell upon her, keeping her motionless and hindering her from unclasping her hands, while some intense, grave yearning was imprisoned within her eyes. Seeing that she did not put out her hand as usual, Will paused a yard from her and said with embarrassment, "I am so grateful to you for seeing me."

"I wanted to see you," said Dorothea, having no other words at command. It did not occur to her to sit down, and Will did not give a cheerful interpretation to this queenly way of receiving him; but he went on to say what he had made up his mind to say.

"I fear you think me foolish and perhaps wrong for coming back so soon. I have been punished for my impatience. You know—every one knows now—a painful story about my parentage.

I knew of it before I went away, and I always meant to tell you of it if—if we ever met again."

There was a slight movement in Dorothea, and she unclasped her hands, but immediately folded them over each other.

"But the affair is matter of gossip now," Will continued. "I wished you to know that something connected with it—something which happened before I went away, helped to bring me down here again. At least, I thought it excused my coming. It was the idea of getting Bulstrode to apply some money to a public purpose—some money which he had thought of giving me. Perhaps it is rather to Bulstrode's credit that he privately offered me compensation for an old injury: he offered to give me a good income to make amends; but I suppose you know the disagreeable story?"

Will looked doubtfully at Dorothea, but his manner was gathering some of the defiant courage with which he always thought of this fact in his destiny. He added, "You know that it must be altogether painful to me."

"Yes—yes—I know," said Dorothea, hastily.

"I did not choose to accept an income from such a source. I was sure that you would not think well of me if I did so," said Will. Why

should he mind saying anything of that sort to her now? She knew that he had avowed his love for her. "I felt that"—he broke off, nevertheless.

"You acted as I should have expected you to act," said Dorothea, her face brightening and her head becoming a little more erect on its beautiful stem.

"I did not believe that you would let any circumstance of my birth create a prejudice in you against me, though it was sure to do so in others," said Will, shaking his head backward in his old way, and looking with a grave appeal into her eyes.

"If it were a new hardship it would be a new reason for me to cling to you," said Dorothea, fervidly. "Nothing could have changed me but——" her heart was swelling, and it was difficult to go on; she made a great effort over herself to say in a low tremulous voice, "but thinking that you were different—not so good as I had believed you to be."

"You are sure to believe me better than I am in everything but one," said Will, giving way to his own feeling in the evidence of hers. "I mean, in my truth to you. When I thought you doubted of that, I didn't care about anything that was left. I thought it was all over with me, and there was nothing to try for—only things to endure."

"I don't doubt you any longer," said Dorothea, putting out her hand—a vague fear for him impelling her unutterable affection.

He took her hand and raised it to his lips, with something like a sob. But he stood with his hat and gloves in the other hand, and might have done for the portrait of a Royalist. Still it was difficult to loose the hand, and Dorothea, withdrawing it in a confusion that distressed her, looked and moved away.

"See how dark the clouds have become, and how the trees are tossed," she said, walking towards the window, yet speaking and moving with only a dim sense of what she was doing.

Will followed her at a little distance, and leaned against the tall back of a leather chair, on which he ventured now to lay his hat and gloves, and free himself from the intolerable durance of formality to which he had been for the first time condemned in Dorothea's presence. It must be confessed that he felt very happy at that moment leaning on the chair. He was not much afraid of anything that she might feel now.

They stood silent, not looking at each other, but looking at the evergreens which were being tossed, and were showing the pale under-side of their leaves against the blackening sky. Will never

enjoyed the prospect of a storm so much: it delivered him from the necessity of going away. Leaves and little branches were hurled about, and the thunder was getting nearer. The light was more and more sombre, but there came a flash of lightning which made them start and look at each other, and then smile. Dorothea began to say what she had been thinking of.

"That was a wrong thing for you to say, that you would have had nothing to try for. If we had lost our own chief good, other people's good would remain, and that is worth trying for. Some can be happy. I seemed to see that more clearly than ever, when I was the most wretched. I can hardly think how I could have borne the trouble, if that feeling had not come to me to make strength."

"You have never felt the sort of misery I felt," said Will; "the misery of knowing that you must despise me."

"But I have felt worse—it was worse to think ill——" Dorothea had begun impetuously, but broke off.

Will coloured. He had the sense that whatever she said was uttered in the vision of a fatality that kept them apart. He was silent a moment, and then said passionately—

"We may at least have the comfort of speaking to each other without disguise. Since I must go away—since we must always be divided—you may think of me as one on the brink of the grave."

While he was speaking there came a vivid flash of lightning which lit each of them up for the other—and the light seemed to be the terror of a hopeless love. Dorothea darted instantaneously from the window; Will followed her, seizing her hand with a spasmodic movement; and so they stood, with their hands clasped, like two children, looking out on the storm, while the thunder gave a tremendous crack and roll above them, and the rain began to pour down. Then they turned their faces towards each other, with the memory of his last words in them, and they did not loose each other's hands.

"There is no hope for me," said Will. "Even if you loved me as well as I love you—even if I were everything to you—I shall most likely always be very poor—on a sober calculation, one can count on nothing but a creeping lot. It is impossible for us ever to belong to each other. It is perhaps base of me to have asked for a word from you. I meant to go away into silence, but I have not been able to do what I meant."

"Don't be sorry," said Dorothea, in her clear tender tones. "I would rather share all the trouble of our parting."

Her lips trembled, and so did his. It was never known which lips were the first to move towards the other lips; but they kissed tremblingly, and then they moved apart.

The rain was dashing against the window-panes as if an angry spirit were within it, and behind it was the great swoop of the wind; it was one of those moments in which both the busy and the idle pause with a certain awe.

Dorothea sat down on the seat nearest to her, a long low ottoman in the middle of the room, and with her hands folded over each other on her lap, looked at the drear outer world. Will stood still an instant looking at her, then seated himself beside her, and laid his hand on hers, which turned itself upward to be clasped. They sat in that way without looking at each other, until the rain abated and began to fall in stillness. Each had been full of thoughts which neither of them could begin to utter.

But when the rain was quiet, Dorothea turned to look at Will. With passionate exclamation, as if some torture-screw were threatening him, he started up and said, "It is impossible!"

He went and leaned on the back of the chair again, and seemed to be battling with his own anger, while she looked towards him sadly.

"It is as fatal as a murder or any other horror that divides people," he burst out again; "it is more intolerable—to have our life maimed by petty accidents."

"No—don't say that—your life need not be maimed," said Dorothea, gently.

"Yes, it must," said Will, angrily. "It is cruel of you to speak in that way—as if there were any comfort. You may see beyond the misery of it, but I don't. It is unkind—it is throwing back my love for you as if it were a trifle, to speak in that way in the face of the fact. We can never be married."

"Some time—we might," said Dorothea, in a trembling voice.

"When?" said Will, bitterly. "What is the use of counting on any success of mine? It is a mere toss-up whether I shall ever do more than keep myself decently, unless I choose to sell myself as a mere pen and a mouthpiece. I can see that clearly enough. I could not offer myself to any woman, even if she had no luxuries to renounce."

There was silence. Dorothea's heart was full of something that she wanted to say, and yet the

words were too difficult. She was wholly possessed by them: at that moment debate was mute within her. And it was very hard that she could not say what she wanted to say. Will was looking out of the window angrily. If he would have looked at her and not gone away from her side, she thought everything would have been easier. At last he turned, still resting against the chair, and stretching his hand automatically towards his hat, said with a sort of exasperation, "Good-bye."

"Oh, I cannot bear it—my heart will break," said Dorothea, starting from her seat, the flood of her young passion bearing down all the obstructions which had kept her silent—the great tears rising and falling in an instant: "I don't mind about poverty—I hate my wealth."

In an instant Will was close to her and had his arms round her, but she drew her head back and held his away gently that she might go on speaking, her large tear-filled eyes looking at his very simply, while she said in a sobbing childlike way, "We could live quite well on my own fortune—it is too much—seven hundred a-year—I want so little—no new clothes—and I will learn what everything costs."

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

"Though it be songe of old and yonge,
That I sholde be to blame,
Theyrs be the charge, that spoke so large
In hurtynge of my name."
—*The Not-browne Mayde.*

It was just after the Lords had thrown out the Reform Bill: that explains how Mr Cadwallader came to be walking on the slope of the lawn near the great conservatory at Freshitt Hall, holding the 'Times' in his hands behind him, while he talked with a trout-fisher's dispassionateness about the prospects of the country to Sir James Chettam. Mrs Cadwallader, the Dowager Lady Chettam, and Celia were sometimes seated on garden-chairs, sometimes walking to meet little Arthur, who was being drawn in his chariot, and, as became the infantine Bouddha, was sheltered by his sacred umbrella with handsome silken fringe.

The ladies also talked politics, though more fitfully. Mrs Cadwallader was strong on the intended

creation of peers: she had it for certain from her cousin that Truberry had gone over to the other side entirely at the instigation of his wife, who had scented peerages in the air from the very first introduction of the Reform question, and would sign her soul away to take precedence of her younger sister, who had married a baronet. Lady Chettam thought that such conduct was very reprehensible, and remembered that Mrs Truberry's mother was a Miss Walsingham of Melspring. Celia confessed it was nicer to be "Lady" than "Mrs," and that Dodo never minded about precedence if she could have her own way. Mrs Cadwallader held that it was a poor satisfaction to take precedence when everybody about you knew that you had not a drop of good blood in your veins; and Celia again, stopping to look at Arthur, said, "It would be very nice, though, if he were a Viscount—and his lordship's little tooth coming through! He might have been, if James had been an Earl."

"My dear Celia," said the Dowager, "James's title is worth far more than any new earldom. I never wished his father to be anything else than Sir James."

"Oh, I only meant about Arthur's little tooth," said Celia, comfortably. "But see, here is my uncle coming."

She tripped off to meet her uncle, while Sir James and Mr Cadwallader came forward to make one group with the ladies. Celia had slipped her arm through her uncle's, and he patted her hand with a rather melancholy "Well, my dear!" As they approached, it was evident that Mr Brooke was looking dejected, but this was fully accounted for by the state of politics; and as he was shaking hands all round without more greeting than a "Well, you're all here, you know," the Rector said, laughingly—

"Don't take the throwing out of the Bill so much to heart, Brooke; you've got all the riff-raff of the country on your side."

"The Bill, eh? ah!" said Mr Brooke, with a mild distractedness of manner. "Thrown out, you know, eh? The Lords are going too far, though. They'll have to pull up. Sad news, you know. I mean, here at home—sad news. But you must not blame me, Chettam."

"What is the matter?" said Sir James. "Not another gamekeeper shot, I hope? It's what I should expect, when a fellow like Trapping Bass is let off so easily."

"Gamekeeper? No. Let us go in; I can tell you all in the house, you know," said Mr Brooke, nodding at the Cadwalladers, to show that he

included them in his confidence. "As to poachers like Trapping Bass, you know, Chettam," he continued, as they were entering, "when you are a magistrate, you'll not find it so easy to commit. Severity is all very well, but it's a great deal easier when you've got somebody to do it for you. You have a soft place in your heart yourself, you know—you're not a Draco, a Jeffreys, that sort of thing."

Mr Brooke was evidently in a state of nervous perturbation. When he had something painful to tell, it was usually his way to introduce it among a number of disjointed particulars, as if it were a medicine that would get a milder flavour by mixing. He continued his chat with Sir James about the poachers until they were all seated, and Mrs Cadwallader, impatient of this drivelling, said—

"I am dying to know the sad news. The gamekeeper is not shot: that is settled. What is it, then?"

"Well, it's a very trying thing, you know," said Mr Brooke. "I'm glad you and the Rector are here; it's a family matter—but you will help us all to bear it, Cadwallader. I've got to break it to you, my dear." Here Mr Brooke looked at Celia—"You've no notion what it is, you know.

And, Chettam, it will annoy you uncommonly—but, you see, you have not been able to hinder it, any more than I have. There's something singular in things: they come round, you know."

"It must be about Dodo," said Celia, who had been used to think of her sister as the dangerous part of the family machinery. She had seated herself on a low stool against her husband's knee.

"For God's sake, let us hear what it is!" said Sir James.

"Well, you know, Chettam, I couldn't help Casaubon's will: it was a sort of will to make things worse."

"Exactly," said Sir James, hastily. "But *what* is worse?"

"Dorothea is going to be married again, you know," said Mr Brooke, nodding toward Celia, who immediately looked up at her husband with a frightened glance, and put her hand on his knee.

Sir James was almost white with anger, but he did not speak.

"Merciful heaven!" said Mrs Cadwallader. "Not to young Ladislaw?"

Mr Brooke nodded, saying, "Yes; to Ladislaw," and then fell into a prudential silence.

"You see, Humphrey!" said Mrs Cadwallader,

waving her arm towards her husband. "Another time you will admit that I have some foresight; or rather you will contradict me and be just as blind as ever. *You* supposed that the young gentleman was gone out of the country."

"So he might be, and yet come back," said the Rector, quietly.

"When did you learn this?" said Sir James, not liking to hear any one else speak, though finding it difficult to speak himself.

"Yesterday," said Mr Brooke, meekly. "I went to Lowick. Dorothea sent for me, you know. It had come about quite suddenly—neither of them had any idea two days ago—not any idea, you know. There's something singular in things But Dorothea is quite determined—it is no use opposing. I put it strongly to her. I did my duty, Chettam. But she can act as she likes, you know."

"It would have been better if I had called him out and shot him a year ago," said Sir James, not from bloody-mindedness, but because he needed something strong to say.

"Really, James, that would have been very disagreeable," said Celia.

"Be reasonable, Chettam. Look at the affair more quietly," said Mr Cadwallader, sorry to see his good-natured friend so overmastered by anger.

"That is not so very easy for a man of any dignity —with any sense of right—when the affair happens to be in his own family," said Sir James, still in his white indignation. "It is perfectly scandalous. If Ladislaw had had a spark of honour he would have gone out of the country at once, and never shown his face in it again. However, I am not surprised. The day after Casaubon's funeral I said what ought to be done. But I was not listened to."

"You wanted what was impossible, you know, Chettam," said Mr Brooke. "You wanted him shipped off. I told you Ladislaw was not to be done as we liked with: he had his ideas. He was a remarkable fellow—I always said he was a remarkable fellow."

"Yes," said Sir James, unable to repress a retort, "it is rather a pity you formed that high opinion of him. We are indebted to that for his being lodged in this neighbourhood. We are indebted to that for seeing a woman like Dorothea degrading herself by marrying him." Sir James made little stoppages between his clauses, the words not coming easily. "A man so marked out by her husband's will, that delicacy ought to have forbidden her from seeing him again—who takes her out of her proper rank—into poverty—has the

meanness to accept such a sacrifice—has always had an objectionable position—a bad origin—and, *I believe*, is a man of little principle and light character. That is my opinion," Sir James ended emphatically, turning aside and crossing his leg.

"I pointed everything out to her," said Mr Brooke, apologetically—"I mean the poverty, and abandoning her position. I said, 'My dear, you don't know what it is to live on seven hundred a-year, and have no carriage, and that kind of thing, and go amongst people who don't know who you are.' I put it strongly to her. But I advise you to talk to Dorothea herself. The fact is, she has a dislike to Casaubon's property. You will hear what she says, you know."

"No—excuse me—I shall not," said Sir James, with more coolness. "I cannot bear to see her again; it is too painful. It hurts me too much that a woman like Dorothea should have done what is wrong."

"Be just, Chettam," said the easy, large-lipped Rector, who objected to all this unnecessary discomfort. "Mrs Casaubon may be acting imprudently: she is giving up a fortune for the sake of a man, and we men have so poor an opinion of each other that we can hardly call a woman wise who does that. But I think you should not con-

demn it as a wrong action, in the strict sense of the word."

"Yes, I do," answered Sir James. "I think that Dorothea commits a wrong action in marrying Ladislaw."

"My dear fellow, we are rather apt to consider an act wrong because it is unpleasant to us," said the Rector, quietly. Like many men who take life easily, he had the knack of saying a home truth occasionally to those who felt themselves virtuously out of temper. Sir James took out his handkerchief and began to bite the corner.

"It is very dreadful of Dodo, though," said Celia, wishing to justify her husband. "She said she *never would* marry again — not anybody at all."

"I heard her say the same thing myself," said Lady Chettam, majestically, as if this were royal evidence.

'Oh, there is usually a silent exception in such cases," said Mrs Cadwallader. "The only wonder to me is, that any of you are surprised. You did nothing to hinder it. If you would have had Lord Triton down here to woo her with his philanthropy, he might have carried her off before the year was over. There was no safety in anything

else. Mr Casaubon had prepared all this as beautifully as possible. He made himself disagreeable—or it pleased God to make him so—and then he dared her to contradict him. It's the way to make any trumpery tempting, to ticket it at a high price in that way."

"I don't know what you mean by wrong, Cadwallader," said Sir James, still feeling a little stung, and turning round in his chair towards the Rector. "He's not a man we can take into the family. At least, I must speak for myself," he continued, carefully keeping his eyes off Mr Brooke. "I suppose others will find his society too pleasant to care about the propriety of the thing."

"Well, you know, Chettam," said Mr Brooke, good-humouredly, nursing his leg, "I can't turn my back on Dorothea. I must be a father to her up to a certain point. I said, 'My dear, I won't refuse to give you away.' I had spoken strongly before. But I can cut off the entail, you know. It will cost money and be troublesome; but I can do it, you know."

Mr Brooke nodded at Sir James, and felt that he was both showing his own force of resolution and propitiating what was just in the Baronet's vexation. He had hit on a more ingenious mode

of parrying than he was aware of. He had touched a motive of which Sir James was ashamed. The mass of his feeling about Dorothea's marriage to Ladislaw was due partly to excusable prejudice, or even justifiable opinion, partly to a jealous repugnance hardly less in Ladislaw's case than in Casaubon's. He was convinced that the marriage was a fatal one for Dorothea. But amid that mass ran a vein of which he was too good and honourable a man to like the avowal even to himself: it was undeniable that the union of the two estates —Tipton and Freshitt—lying charmingly within a ring-fence, was a prospect that flattered him for his son and heir. Hence when Mr Brooke noddingly appealed to that motive, Sir James felt a sudden embarrassment; there was a stoppage in his throat; he even blushed. He had found more words than usual in the first jet of his anger, but Mr Brooke's propitiation was more clogging to his tongue than Mr Cadwallader's caustic hint.

But Celia was glad to have room for speech after her uncle's suggestion of the marriage ceremony, and she said, though with as little eagerness of manner as if the question had turned on an invitation to dinner, "Do you mean that Dodo is going to be married directly, uncle?"

"In three weeks, you know," said Mr Brooke,

helplessly. "I can do nothing to hinder it, Cadwallader," he added, turning for a little countenance toward the Rector, who said—

"*I* should not make any fuss about it. If she likes to be poor, that is her affair. Nobody would have said anything if she had married the young fellow because he was rich. Plenty of beneficed clergy are poorer than they will be. Here is Elinor," continued the provoking husband; "she vexed her friends by marrying me: I had hardly a thousand a-year—I was a lout—nobody could see anything in me—my shoes were not the right cut—all the men wondered how a woman could like me. Upon my word, I must take Ladislaw's part until I hear more harm of him."

"Humphrey, that is all sophistry, and you know it," said his wife. "Everything is all one—that is the beginning and end with you. As if you had not been a Cadwallader! Does any one suppose that I would have taken such a monster as you by any other name?"

"And a clergyman too," observed Lady Chettam, with approbation. "Elinor cannot be said to have descended below her rank. It is difficult to say what Mr Ladislaw is, eh, James?"

Sir James gave a small grunt, which was less respectful than his usual mode of answering his

mother. Celia looked up at him like a thoughtful kitten.

"It must be admitted that his blood is a frightful mixture!" said Mrs Cadwallader. "The Casaubon cuttle-fish fluid to begin with, and then a rebellious Polish fiddler or dancing-master, was it?—and then an old clo——"

"Nonsense, Elinor," said the Rector, rising. "It is time for us to go."

"After all, he is a pretty sprig," said Mrs Cadwallader, rising too, and wishing to make amends. "He is like the fine old Crichley portraits before the idiots came in."

"I'll go with you," said Mr Brooke, starting up with alacrity. "You must all come and dine with me to-morrow, you know—eh, Celia, my dear?"

"You will, James—won't you?" said Celia, taking her husband's hand.

"Oh, of course, if you like," said Sir James, pulling down his waistcoat, but unable yet to adjust his face good-humouredly. "That is to say, if it is not to meet anybody else."

"No, no, no," said Mr Brooke, understanding the condition. "Dorothea would not come, you know, unless you had been to see her."

When Sir James and Celia were alone, she said,

"Do you mind about my having the carriage to go to Lowick, James?"

"What, now, directly?" he answered, with some surprise.

"Yes, it is very important," said Celia.

"Remember, Celia, I cannot see her," said Sir James.

"Not if she gave up marrying?"

"What is the use of saying that?—however, I'm going to the stables. I'll tell Briggs to bring the carriage round."

Celia thought it was of great use, if not to say that, at least to take a journey to Lowick in order to influence Dorothea's mind. All through their girlhood she had felt that she could act on her sister by a word judiciously placed—by opening a little window for the daylight of her own understanding to enter among the strange coloured lamps by which Dodo habitually saw. And Celia the matron naturally felt more able to advise her childless sister. How could any one understand Dodo so well as Celia did, or love her so tenderly?

Dorothea, busy in her boudoir, felt a glow of pleasure at the sight of her sister so soon after the revelation of her intended marriage. She had prefigured to herself, even with exaggeration, the dis-

gust of her friends, and she had even feared that Celia might be kept aloof from her.

"O Kitty, I am delighted to see you!" said Dorothea, putting her hands on Celia's shoulders, and beaming on her. "I almost thought you would not come to me."

"I have not brought Arthur, because I was in a hurry," said Celia, and they sat down on two small chairs opposite each other, with their knees touching.

"You know, Dodo, it is very bad," said Celia, in her placid guttural, looking as prettily free from humours as possible. "You have disappointed us all so. And I can't think that it ever *will* be —you never can go and live in that way. And then there are all your plans! You never can have thought of that. James would have taken any trouble for you, and you might have gone on all your life doing what you liked."

"On the contrary, dear," said Dorothea, "I never could do anything that I liked. I have never carried out any plan yet."

"Because you always wanted things that wouldn't do. But other plans would have come. And how *can* you marry Mr Ladislaw, that we none of us ever thought you *could* marry? It shocks James so dreadfully. And then it is all so

different from what you have always been. You would have Mr Casaubon because he had such a great soul, and was so old and dismal and learned; and now, to think of marrying Mr Ladislaw, who has got no estate or anything. I suppose it is because you must be making yourself uncomfortable in some way or other."

Dorothea laughed.

"Well, it is very serious, Dodo," said Celia, becoming more impressive. "How will you live? and you will go away among queer people. And I shall never see you—and you won't mind about little Arthur—and I thought you always would——"

Celia's rare tears had got into her eyes, and the corners of her mouth were agitated.

"Dear Celia," said Dorothea, with tender gravity, "if you don't ever see me, it will not be my fault."

"Yes, it will," said Celia, with the same touching distortion of her small features. "How can I come to you or have you with me when James can't bear it?—that is because he thinks it is not right—he thinks you are so wrong, Dodo. But you always were wrong; only I can't help loving you. And nobody can think where you will live: where can you go?"

"I am going to London," said Dorothea.

"How can you always live in a street? And you will be so poor. I could give you half my things, only how can I, when I never see you?"

"Bless you, Kitty," said Dorothea, with gentle warmth. "Take comfort: perhaps James will forgive me some time."

"But it would be much better if you would not be married," said Celia, drying her eyes, and returning to her argument; "then there would be nothing uncomfortable. And you would not do what nobody thought you could do. James always said you ought to be a queen; but this is not at all being like a queen. You know what mistakes you have always been making, Dodo, and this is another. Nobody thinks Mr Ladislaw a proper husband for you. And you *said* you would never be married again."

"It is quite true that I might be a wiser person, Celia," said Dorothea, "and that I might have done something better, if I had been better. But this is what I am going to do. I have promised to marry Mr Ladislaw; and I am going to marry him."

The tone in which Dorothea said this was a note that Celia had long learned to recognise. She was silent a few moments, and then said, as

if she had dismissed all contest, "Is he very fond of you, Dodo?"

"I hope so. I am very fond of him."

"That is nice," said Celia, comfortably. "Only I would rather you had such a sort of husband as James is, with a place very near, that I could drive to."

Dorothea smiled, and Celia looked rather meditative. Presently she said, "I cannot think how it all came about." Celia thought it would be pleasant to hear the story.

"I daresay not," said Dorothea, pinching her sister's chin. "If you knew how it came about, it would not seem wonderful to you."

"Can't you tell me?" said Celia, settling her arms cozily.

"No, dear, you would have to feel with me, else you would never know."

CHAPTER LXXXV.

"Then went the jury out, whose names were Mr Blindman, Mr No-good, Mr Malice, Mr Love-lust, Mr Live-loose, Mr Heady, Mr High-mind, Mr Enmity, Mr Liar, Mr Cruelty, Mr Hate-light, Mr Implacable, who every one gave in his private verdict against him among themselves, and afterwards unanimously concluded to bring him in guilty before the judge. And first among themselves, Mr Blindman, the foreman, said, I see clearly that this man is a heretic. Then said Mr No-good, Away with such a fellow from the earth! Ay, said Mr Malice, for I hate the very look of him. Then said Mr Love-lust, I could never endure him. Nor I, said Mr Live-loose; for he would be always condemning my way. Hang him, hang him, said Mr Heady. A sorry scrub, said Mr High-mind. My heart riseth against him, said Mr Enmity. He is a rogue, said Mr Liar. Hanging is too good for him, said Mr Cruelty. Let us despatch him out of the way, said Mr Hate-light. Then said Mr Implacable, Might I have all the world given me, I could not be reconciled to him; therefore let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death."—*Pilgrim's Progress.*

WHEN immortal Bunyan makes his picture of the persecuting passions bringing in their verdict of guilty, who pities Faithful? That is a rare and blessed lot which some greatest men have not attained, to know ourselves guiltless before a condemning crowd—to be sure that what we are denounced for is solely the good in us. The pitiable lot is that of the man who could not call himself a martyr even though he were to persuade

himself that the men who stoned him were but ugly passions incarnate—who knows that he is stoned, not for professing the Right, but for not being the man he professed to be.

This was the consciousness that Bulstrode was withering under while he made his preparations for departing from Middlemarch, and going to end his stricken life in that sad refuge, the indifference of new faces. The duteous merciful constancy of his wife had delivered him from one dread, but it could not hinder her presence from being still a tribunal before which he shrank from confession and desired advocacy. His equivocations with himself about the death of Raffles had sustained the conception of an Omniscience whom he prayed to, yet he had a terror upon him which would not let him expose them to judgment by a full confession to his wife: the acts which he had washed and diluted with inward argument and motive, and for which it seemed comparatively easy to win invisible pardon—what name would she call them by? That she should ever silently call his acts Murder was what he could not bear. He felt shrouded by her doubt: he got strength to face her from the sense that she could not yet feel warranted in pronouncing that worst condemnation on him. Some time, perhaps—when he

was dying—he would tell her all: in the deep shadow of that time, when she held his hand in the gathering darkness, she might listen without recoiling from his touch. Perhaps: but concealment had been the habit of his life, and the impulse to confession had no power against the dread of a deeper humiliation.

He was full of timid care for his wife, not only because he deprecated any harshness of judgment from her, but because he felt a deep distress at the sight of her suffering. She had sent her daughters away to board at a school on the coast, that this crisis might be hidden from them as far as possible. Set free by their absence from the intolerable necessity of accounting for her grief or of beholding their frightened wonder, she could live unconstrainedly with the sorrow that was every day streaking her hair with whiteness and making her eyelids languid.

"Tell me anything that you would like to have me do, Harriet," Bulstrode had said to her; "I mean with regard to arrangements of property. It is my intention not to sell the land I possess in this neighbourhood, but to leave it to you as a safe provision. If you have any wish on such subjects, do not conceal it from me."

A few days afterwards, when she had returned

from a visit to her brother's, she began to speak to her husband on a subject which had for some time been in her mind.

"I *should* like to do something for my brother's family, Nicholas; and I think we are bound to make some amends to Rosamond and her husband. Walter says Mr Lydgate must leave the town, and his practice is almost good for nothing, and they have very little left to settle anywhere with. I would rather do without something for ourselves, to make some amends to my poor brother's family."

Mrs Bulstrode did not wish to go nearer to the facts than in the phrase "make some amends;" knowing that her husband must understand her. He had a particular reason, which she was not aware of, for wincing under her suggestion. He hesitated before he said—

"It is not possible to carry out your wish in the way you propose, my dear. Mr Lydgate has virtually rejected any further service from me. He has returned the thousand pounds which I lent him. Mrs Casaubon advanced him the sum for that purpose. Here is his letter."

The letter seemed to cut Mrs Bulstrode severely. The mention of Mrs Casaubon's loan seemed a reflection of that public feeling which held it a mat-

ter of course that every one would avoid a connection with her husband. She was silent for some time; and the tears fell one after the other, her chin trembling as she wiped them away. Bulstrode, sitting opposite to her, ached at the sight of that grief-worn face, which two months before had been bright and blooming. It had aged to keep sad company with his own withered features. Urged into some effort at comforting her, he said—

"There is another means, Harriet, by which I might do a service to your brother's family, if you like to act in it. And it would, I think, be beneficial to you: it would be an advantageous way of managing the land, which I mean to be yours."

She looked attentive.

"Garth once thought of undertaking the management of Stone Court in order to place your nephew Fred there. The stock was to remain as it is, and they were to pay a certain share of the profits instead of an ordinary rent. That would be a desirable beginning for the young man, in conjunction with his employment under Garth. Would it be a satisfaction to you?"

"Yes, it would," said Mrs Bulstrode, with some return of energy. "Poor Walter is so cast down; I would try anything in my power to do him some

good before I go away. We have always been brother and sister."

"You must make the proposal to Garth yourself, Harriet," said Mr Bulstrode, not liking what he had to say, but desiring the end he had in view, for other reasons besides the consolation of his wife. "You must state to him that the land is virtually yours, and that he need have no transactions with me. Communications can be made through Standish. I mention this, because Garth gave up being my agent. I can put into your hands a paper which he himself drew up, stating conditions; and you can propose his renewed acceptance of them. I think it is not unlikely that he will accept when you propose the thing for the sake of your nephew."

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

"Le cœur se sature d'amour comme d'un sel divin qui le conserve; de là l'incorruptible adhérence de ceux qui se sont aimés dès l'aube de la vie, et la fraîcheur des vieilles amours prolongés. Il existe un embaumement d'amour. C'est de Daphnis et Chlöe que sont faits Philémon et Baucis. Cette vieillesse là, resemblance du soir avec l'aurore."

—Victor Hugo: *L'homme qui rit.*

Mrs Garth, hearing Caleb enter the passage about tea-time, opened the parlour-door and said, "There you are, Caleb. Have you had your dinner?" (Mr Garth's meals were much subordinated to "business.")

"Oh yes, a good dinner—cold mutton and I don't know what. Where is Mary?"

"In the garden with Letty, I think."

"Fred is not come yet?"

"No. Are you going out again without taking tea, Caleb?" said Mrs Garth, seeing that her absent-minded husband was putting on again the hat which he had just taken off.

"No, no; I'm only going to Mary a minute."

Mary was in a grassy corner of the garden, where there was a swing loftily hung between two pear-trees. She had a pink kerchief tied over her head, making a little poke to shade her eyes from the level sunbeams, while she was giving a glorious swing to Letty, who laughed and screamed wildly.

Seeing her father, Mary left the swing and went to meet him, pushing back the pink kerchief and smiling afar off at him with the involuntary smile of loving pleasure.

"I came to look for you, Mary," said Mr Garth. "Let us walk about a bit."

Mary knew quite well that her father had something particular to say: his eyebrows made their pathetic angle, and there was a tender gravity in his voice: these things had been signs to her when she was Letty's age. She put her arm within his, and they turned by the row of nut-trees.

"It will be a sad while before you can be married, Mary," said her father, not looking at her, but at the end of the stick which he held in his other hand.

"Not a sad while, father—I mean to be merry," said Mary, laughingly. "I have been single and merry for four-and-twenty years and more: I suppose it will not be quite as long again as that." Then, after a little pause, she said, more gravely,

bending her face before her father's, "If you are contented with Fred?"

Caleb screwed up his mouth and turned his head aside wisely.

"Now, father, you did praise him last Wednesday. You said he had an uncommon notion of stock, and a good eye for things."

"Did I?" said Caleb, rather slyly.

"Yes, I put it all down, and the date, *anno Domini*, and everything," said Mary. "You like things to be neatly booked. And then his behaviour to you, father, is really good—he has a deep respect for you; and it is impossible to have a better temper than Fred has."

"Ay, ay—you want to coax me into thinking him a fine match."

"No, indeed, father. I don't love him because he is a fine match."

"What for, then?"

"Oh dear, because I have always loved him. I should never like scolding any one else so well; and that is a point to be thought of in a husband."

"Your mind is quite settled, then, Mary?" said Caleb, returning to his first tone. "There's no other wish come into it since things have been going on as they have been of late?" (Caleb

meant a great deal in that vague phrase;) "because, better late than never. A woman mustn't force her heart—she'll do a man no good by that."

"My feelings have not changed, father," said Mary, calmly. "I shall be constant to Fred as long as he is constant to me. I don't think either of us could spare the other, or like any one else better, however much we might admire them. It would make too great a difference to us—like seeing all the old places altered, and changing the name for everything. We must wait for each other a long while; but Fred knows that."

Instead of speaking immediately, Caleb stood still and screwed his stick on the grassy walk. Then he said, with emotion in his voice, "Well, I've got a bit of news. What do you think of Fred going to live at Stone Court, and managing the land there?"

"How can that ever be, father?" said Mary, wonderingly.

"He would manage it for his aunt Bulstrode. The poor woman has been to me begging and praying. She wants to do the lad good, and it might be a fine thing for him. With saving, he might gradually buy the stock, and he has a turn for farming."

"Oh, Fred would be so happy! It is too good to believe."

"Ah, but mind you," said Caleb, turning his head warningly, "I must take it on *my* shoulders, and be responsible, and see after everything—and that will grieve your mother a bit, though she mayn't say so. Fred had need be careful."

"Perhaps it is too much, father," said Mary, checked in her joy. "There would be no happiness in bringing you any fresh trouble."

"Nay, nay—work is my delight, child, when it doesn't vex your mother. And then, if you and Fred get married," here Caleb's voice shook just perceptibly, "he'll be steady and saving; and you've got your mother's cleverness, and mine too, in a woman's sort of way; and you'll keep him in order. He'll be coming by-and-by, so I wanted to tell you first, because I think you'd like to tell *him* by yourselves. After that, I could talk it well over with him, and we could go into business and the nature of things."

"Oh, you dear good father!" cried Mary, putting her hands round her father's neck, while he bent his head placidly, willing to be caressed. "I wonder if any other girl thinks her father the best man in the world!"

"Nonsense, child; you'll think your husband better."

"Impossible," said Mary, relapsing into her usual tone; "husbands are an inferior class of men, who require keeping in order."

When they were entering the house with Letty, who had run to join them, Mary saw Fred at the orchard-gate, and went to meet him.

"What fine clothes you wear, you extravagant youth!" said Mary, as Fred stood still and raised his hat to her with playful formality. "You are not learning economy."

"Now that is too bad, Mary," said Fred. "Just look at the edges of these coat-cuffs! It is only by dint of good brushing that I look respectable. I am saving up three suits—one for a wedding-suit."

"How very droll you will look!—like a gentleman in an old fashion-book."

"Oh no, they will keep two years."

"Two years! be reasonable, Fred," said Mary, turning to walk. "Don't encourage flattering expectations."

"Why not? One lives on them better than on unflattering ones. If we can't be married in two years, the truth will be quite bad enough when it comes."

"I have heard a story of a young gentleman who once encouraged flattering expectations, and they did him harm."

"Mary, if you've got something discouraging to tell me, I shall bolt; I shall go into the house to Mr Garth. I'm out of spirits. My father is so cut up—home is not like itself. I can't bear any more bad news."

"Should you call it bad news to be told that you were to live at Stone Court, and manage the farm, and be remarkably prudent, and save money every year till all the stock and furniture were your own, and you were a distinguished agricultural character, as Mr Borthrop Trumbull says—rather stout, I fear, and with the Greek and Latin sadly weather-worn?"

"You don't mean anything except nonsense, Mary?" said Fred, colouring slightly, nevertheless.

"That is what my father has just told me of as what may happen, and he never talks nonsense," said Mary, looking up at Fred now, while he grasped her hand as they walked, till it rather hurt her; but she would not complain.

"Oh, I could be a tremendously good fellow then, Mary, and we could be married directly."

"Not so fast, sir; how do you know that I would not rather defer our marriage for some

years? That would leave you time to misbehave, and then if I liked some one else better, I should have an excuse for jilting you."

"Pray don't joke, Mary," said Fred, with strong feeling. "Tell me seriously that all this is true, and that you are happy because of it—because you love me best."

"It is all true, Fred, and I am happy because of it—because I love you best," said Mary, in a tone of obedient recitation.

They lingered on the door-step under the steep-roofed porch, and Fred almost in a whisper said,—

"When we were first engaged, with the umbrella-ring, Mary, you used to——"

The spirit of joy began to laugh more decidedly in Mary's eyes, but the fatal Ben came running to the door with Brownie yapping behind him, and, bouncing against them, said—

"Fred and Mary! are you ever coming in?—or may I eat your cake?"

FINALE.

EVERY limit is a beginning as well as an ending. Who can quit young lives after being long in company with them, and not desire to know what befell them in their after-years? For the fragment of a life, however typical, is not the sample of an even web: promises may not be kept, and an ardent outset may be followed by declension; latent powers may find their long-waited opportunity; a past error may urge a grand retrieval.

Marriage, which has been the bourne of so many narratives, is still a great beginning, as it was to Adam and Eve, who kept their honeymoon in Eden, but had their first little one among the thorns and thistles of the wilderness. It is still the beginning of the home epic—the gradual conquest or irremediable loss of that complete union which makes the advancing years a climax, and age the harvest of sweet memories in common.

Some set out, like Crusaders of old, with a glorious equipment of hope and enthusiasm, and get broken by the way, wanting patience with each other and the world.

All who have cared for Fred Vincy and Mary Garth will like to know that these two made no such failure, but achieved a solid mutual happiness. Fred surprised his neighbours in various ways. He became rather distinguished in his side of the county as a theoretic and practical farmer, and produced a work on the 'Cultivation of Green Crops and the Economy of Cattle-Feeding' which won him high congratulations at agricultural meetings; but in Middlemarch admiration was more reserved: most persons there were inclined to believe that the merit of Fred's authorship was due to his wife, since they had never expected Fred Vincy to write on turnips and mangel-wurzel.

But when Mary wrote a little book for her boys, called 'Stories of Great Men, taken from Plutarch,' and had it printed and published by Gripp & Co., Middlemarch, every one in the town was willing to give the credit of this work to Fred, observing that he had been to the University, "where the ancients were studied," and might have been a clergyman if he had chosen.

In this way it was made clear that Middlemarch had never been deceived, and that there was no need to praise anybody for writing a book, since it was always done by somebody else.

Moreover, Fred remained unswervingly steady. Some years after his marriage he told Mary that his happiness was half owing to Farebrother, who gave him a strong pull-up at the right moment. I cannot say that he was never again misled by his hopefulness: the yield of crops or the profits of a cattle sale usually fell below his estimate; and he was always prone to believe that he could make money by the purchase of a horse which turned out badly—though this, Mary observed, was of course the fault of the horse, not of Fred's judgment. He kept his love of horsemanship, but he rarely allowed himself a day's hunting; and when he did so, it was remarkable that he submitted to be laughed at for cowardliness at the fences, seeming to see Mary and the boys sitting on the five-barred gate, or showing their curly heads between hedge and ditch.

There were three boys: Mary was not discontented that she brought forth men-children only; and when Fred wished to have a girl like her, she said, laughingly, "That would be too great a trial to your mother." Mrs Vincy in her declin-

ing years, and in the diminished lustre of her housekeeping, was much comforted by her perception that two at least of Fred's boys were real Vincys, and did not "feature the Garths." But Mary secretly rejoiced that the youngest of the three was very much what her father must have been when he wore a round jacket, and showed a marvellous nicety of aim in playing at marbles, or in throwing stones to bring down the mellow pears.

Ben and Letty Garth, who were uncle and aunt before they were well in their teens, disputed much as to whether nephews or nieces were more desirable; Ben contending that it was clear girls were good for less than boys, else they would not be always in petticoats, which showed how little they were meant for; whereupon Letty, who argued much from books, got angry in replying that God made coats of skins for both Adam and Eve alike—also it occurred to her that in the East the men too wore petticoats. But this latter argument, obscuring the majesty of the former, was one too many, for Ben answered contemptuously, "The more spooneys they!" and immediately appealed to his mother whether boys were not better than girls. Mrs Garth pronounced that both were alike naughty, but that boys were

undoubtedly stronger, could run faster, and throw with more precision to a greater distance. With this oracular sentence Ben was well satisfied, not minding the naughtiness; but Letty took it ill, her feeling of superiority being stronger than her muscles.

Fred never became rich—his hopefulness had not led him to expect that; but he gradually saved enough to become owner of the stock and furniture at Stone Court, and the work which Mr Garth put into his hands carried him in plenty through those "bad times" which are always present with farmers. Mary, in her matronly days, became as solid in figure as her mother; but, unlike her, gave the boys little formal teaching, so that Mrs Garth was alarmed lest they should never be well grounded in grammar and geography. Nevertheless, they were found quite forward enough when they went to school; perhaps, because they had liked nothing so well as being with their mother. When Fred was riding home on winter evenings he had a pleasant vision beforehand of the bright hearth in the wainscoated parlour, and was sorry for other men who could not have Mary for their wife; especially for Mr Farebrother. "He was ten times worthier of you than I was," Fred could now say to her, magnanimously. "To

be sure he was," Mary answered; "and for that reason he could do better without me. But you—I shudder to think what you would have been—a curate in debt for horse-hire and cambric pocket-handkerchiefs!"

On inquiry it might possibly be found that Fred and Mary still inhabit Stone Court—that the creeping plants still cast the foam of their blossoms over the fine stone-wall into the field where the walnut-trees stand in stately row—and that on sunny days the two lovers who were first engaged with the umbrella-ring may be seen in white-haired placidity at the open window from which Mary Garth, in the days of old Peter Featherstone, had often been ordered to look out for Mr Lydgate.

Lydgate's hair never became white. He died when he was only fifty, leaving his wife and children provided for by a heavy insurance on his life. He had gained an excellent practice, alternating, according to the season, between London and a Continental bathing-place; having written a treatise on Gout, a disease which has a good deal of wealth on its side. His skill was relied on by many paying patients, but he always regarded himself as a failure: he had not done what he once meant to do. His acquaintances thought him enviable to have so

charming a wife, and nothing happened to shake their opinion. Rosamond never committed a second compromising indiscretion. She simply continued to be mild in her temper, inflexible in her judgment, disposed to admonish her husband, and able to frustrate him by stratagem. As the years went on he opposed her less and less, whence Rosamond concluded that he had learned the value of her opinion; on the other hand, she had a more thorough conviction of his talents now that he gained a good income, and instead of the threatened cage in Bride Street provided one all flowers and gilding, fit for the bird of paradise that she resembled. In brief, Lydgate was what is called a successful man. But he died prematurely of diphtheria, and Rosamond afterwards married an elderly and wealthy physician, who took kindly to her four children. She made a very pretty show with her daughters, driving out in her carriage, and often spoke of her happiness as "a reward"—she did not say for what, but probably she meant that it was a reward for her patience with Tertius, whose temper never became faultless, and to the last occasionally let slip a bitter speech which was more memorable than the signs he made of his repentance... He once called her his basil plant; and when she

asked for an explanation, said that basil was a plant which had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains. Rosamond had a placid but strong answer to such speeches Why then had he chosen her? It was a pity he had not had Mrs Ladislaw, whom he was always praising and placing above her. And thus the conversation ended with the advantage on Rosamond's side. But it would be unjust not to tell, that she never uttered a word in depreciation of Dorothea, keeping in religious remembrance the generosity which had come to her aid in the sharpest crisis of her life.

Dorothea herself had no dreams of being praised above other women, feeling that there was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better. Still, she never repented that she had given up position and fortune to marry Will Ladislaw, and he would have held it the greatest shame as well as sorrow to him if she had repented. They were bound to each other by a love stronger than any impulses which could have marred it. No life would have been possible to Dorothea which was not filled with emotion, and she had now a life filled also with a beneficent activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and marking out for

herself. Will became an ardent public man, working well in those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days, and getting at last returned to Parliament by a constituency who paid his expenses. Dorothea could have liked nothing better, since wrongs existed, than that her husband should be in the thick of a struggle against them, and that she should give him wifely help. Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done—not even Sir James Chettam, who went no further than the negative prescription that she ought not to have married Will Ladislaw.

But this opinion of his did not cause a lasting alienation; and the way in which the family was made whole again was characteristic of all concerned. Mr Brooke could not resist the pleasure of corresponding with Will and Dorothea; and one morning when his pen had been remarkably fluent on the prospects of municipal reform, it ran off into an invitation to the Grange, which, once written, could not be done away with at less cost

than the sacrifice (hardly to be conceived) of the whole valuable letter. During the months of this correspondence Mr Brooke had continually, in his talk with Sir James Chettam, been presupposing or hinting that the intention of cutting off the entail was still maintained; and the day on which his pen gave the daring invitation, he went to Freshitt expressly to intimate that he had a stronger sense than ever of the reasons for taking that energetic step as a precaution against any mixture of low blood in the heir of the Brookes.

But that morning something exciting had happened at the Hall. A letter had come to Celia which made her cry silently as she read it; and when Sir James, unused to see her in tears, asked anxiously what was the matter, she burst out in a wail such as he had never heard from her before.

"Dorothea has a little boy. And you will not let me go and see her. And I am sure she wants to see me. And she will not know what to do with the baby—she will do wrong things with it. And they thought she would die. It is very dreadful! Suppose it had been me and little Arthur, and Dodo had been hindered from coming to see me! I wish you would be less unkind, James!"

"Good heavens, Celia!" said Sir James, much

wrought upon, "what do you wish? I will do anything you like. I will take you to town to-morrow if you wish it." And Celia did wish it.

It was after this that Mr Brooke came, and meeting the Baronet in the grounds, began to chat with him in ignorance of the news, which Sir James for some reason did not care to tell him immediately. But when the entail was touched on in the usual way, he said, "My dear sir, it is not for me to dictate to you, but for my part I would let that alone. I would let things remain as they are."

Mr Brooke felt so much surprise that he did not at once find out how much he was relieved by the sense that he was not expected to do anything in particular.

Such being the bent of Celia's heart, it was inevitable that Sir James should consent to a reconciliation with Dorothea and her husband. Where women love each other, men learn to smother their mutual dislike. Sir James never liked Ladislaw, and Will always preferred to have Sir James's company mixed with another kind: they were on a footing of reciprocal tolerance which was made quite easy only when Dorothea and Celia were present.

It became an understood thing that Mr and

Mrs Ladislaw should pay at least two visits during the year to the Grange, and there came gradually a small row of cousins at Freshitt who enjoyed playing with the two cousins visiting Tipton as much as if the blood of these cousins had been less dubiously mixed.

Mr Brooke lived to a good old age, and his estate was inherited by Dorothea's son, who might have represented Middlemarch, but declined, thinking that his opinions had less chance of being stifled if he remained out of doors.

Sir James never ceased to regard Dorothea's second marriage as a mistake; and indeed this remained the tradition concerning it in Middlemarch, where she was spoken of to a younger generation as a fine girl who married a sickly clergyman, old enough to be her father, and in little more than a year after his death gave up her estate to marry his cousin—young enough to have been his son, with no property, and not well-born. Those who had not seen anything of Dorothea usually observed that she could not have been "a nice woman," else she would not have married either the one or the other.

Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling under

prosaic conditions. Among the many remarks passed on her mistakes, it was never said in the neighbourhood of Middlemarch that such mistakes could not have happened if the society into which she was born had not smiled on propositions of marriage from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age—on modes of education which make a woman's knowledge another name for motley ignorance—on rules of conduct which are in flat contradiction with its own loudly-asserted beliefs. While this is the social air in which mortals begin to breathe, there will be collisions such as those in Dorothea's life, where great feelings will take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it. A new Theresa will hardly have the opportunity of reforming a conventual life, any more than a new Antigone will spend her heroic piety in daring all for the sake of a brother's burial: the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is for ever gone. But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know.

Her finely-touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible. Her full nature, like that river of which Alexander broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

THE END.

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